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THE LADIES OF LOVEL-LEIGH.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF
"MARGARET AND HER BRIDESMAIDS,"
"THE VALLEY OF A HUNDRED FIRES,"

&c. &c.

Ellen

"Out of God's choicest treasury we bring down
New virtue to sustain all ill—new power
To braid life's thorns into a regal crown.
We pass'd into the outer world to prove
The strength miraculous of Sisters' Love."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,
SUCCESSORS TO HENRY COLBURN,
13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

1862.

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I DEDICATE THIS TALE TO
MY DEAR AUNT,
UNDER WHOSE ROOF I LEARNT TO APPRECIATE
THE HAPPINESS OF ORDER,
TO TASTE
THE PLEASURES OF LITERATURE,
AND
TO WORSHIP
THE WONDERFUL CHARMs OF NATURE.

THE LADIES OF LOVEL-LEIGH.

CHAPTER I.

“What is life worth without a heart to feel
The great and lovely—and the poetry
And sacredness of things?” BAILEY.

THIS was the picture of our home.

We sat (three sisters) in the withdrawing room, so styled in our ancient house, where change was unknown but in ourselves, growing up all too quickly into womanhood.

The room was coved and lofty, and, entered by a small door, deceived the eye, deluding it into giving this enclosed space a greater

height than if it had been arched over by the sky itself. A large medallion enclosed a group of gods and goddesses, sporting in the clouds, painted by Verrio, who seemed to echo back the sounds and words uttered below. Round this medallion was a richly embossed scroll or frame-work, that wound itself in many intricate folds and curious twists, descending every here and there down to the walls, where it encircled single figures of the heathen deities, painted by the same master of his art. Rich and singular was this roof of man's work, and, as we were taught to believe, unequalled in art and beauty.

Three large casement windows on one side of the room, and two on the adjoining one, poured in light and sunshine sufficient to bring out every intricate pattern, casting strong shadows between them, which but enhanced the light.

The embrasures of the windows were large, forming sills four feet in depth, com-

posed of polished chestnut wood, which ordinarily we used as pleasant seats, shaded from observation by heavy curtains of crimson velvet. These were scarcely moved by the light summer breeze that blew in at the wide open casements, but they cast back the beams of the sun in rosy hues all aslant, making that rich and bright which was time-stained and decayed.

For the furniture was ancient and grey, worn with ever vigilant dusting, as with use, so that the heavy carvings were undefined by gilded mouldings, long since dimmed and erased. The silk coverings flared with strange flowers and birds, grotesque from the fading of some of the colours, and imperturbable freshness of others — incongruous as rouge on a faded cheek. The carpet covered but a portion of the room, and was of French manufacture resembling tapestry. The groundwork had been blue, now faded in regular lines, marking the beams from the windows in

pale shadowy white, wholly lustreless. The floor was of oak, dark as ebony with age and polish, reflecting back the heavy chairs and tables, shadowy legs meeting the real ones. The room was panelled with chestnut wood; the cornice, a hand's breadth stood out from the wall, four feet from the ground; on this rested the frames of some ancient family pictures depicting our ancestors as large as life.

In one corner of the room was a skeleton clock, its mechanism all exposed, and bearing old Dutch inscriptions and characters upon it. A large rotatory brass-mounted bookcase filled the other; while the end of the room was wholly given up to an elaborately decorated fireplace.

The chimney-piece was composed of three stories, beginning with a white marble plinth, on which was exquisitely carved delicate branches of flowers, baskets of fruit, with little Cupids sporting between.

Above was a representation of Ceres,

with all her attendants and attributes, cut out in Spanish wood with infinite delicacy and art. Higher still was Jupiter, holding a court of the celestial bodies, his own august head touching the ceiling, while the lowest gods of all were just within my reach. On either side of the mantel-piece were deep recesses, which held on their ebony shelves specimens of every description of china, arranged in order, from the cumbrous old Plymouth crockery up to the most delicate porcelain, including works of art that our father would point out to us as matchless,— one set in particular, of Sévres, on every cup of which was an enamelled portrait worth fifty guineas, and the saucers were enriched with jewels. The teapots, ewers, and sugar basins were interlaced with bars of gold banded together with a jewel.

We admired while we wondered at the genius and expense bestowed on that which was useless. They were too costly and

fragile to be touched, yet bearing the form of service. This incongruity was of use, in preparing us for discords in most things, rousing within us the desire to extract melody or good under any combination. As yet we were unconscious of the necessity, for our lives had flowed with the noiseless calm of a broad and pleasant river, hitherto unruffled by the slightest breeze. Like the roses with which my sisters had laden themselves, we existed in sunshine and fragrance, and had neither tasted nor experienced the bitterness of neglect, or the pang of disappointment.

As the zephyrs blew in and out of the casements, they sent the perfume of the roses in pleasant gushes through the room, and the soft low laughter of my white-robed sisters was fitting music to accompany them. They decorated each other with the prettiest buds, until their faces peeped out from beneath the crimson

crown, flushed with the rosy shadow, and their own blushing happiness.

Pictures such as these engrave themselves even on the most childish mind, and are recalled in after years, as if it was the remembrance of some happy dream.

The quaint antique beauty of the room, the fair slender girls, rose laden, the profusion of flowers, their perfume, with summer sounds and air coming in at the windows, and a sort of golden hue of sunshine over all, awoke in my heart a sudden burst of pleasure. With such feelings is born simultaneously the desire to share this pure delight with others. I wondered if my sisters, older than I, had ever experienced this perception of beauty, opening also a fund of awakening consciousness that the world contained vast treasures of them,—and the goodness of God to give us such pleasures, with the perception to enjoy them. My mind revelled in a sort of fantasy, and soared up to the kingdom

in which our mother dwelt, asking of my reason if she abode in lovelier scenes, or richer beauty, or was heaven only so much fairer than earth, in that we should there meet to part no more. Did she look down from unsading summer, and behold her children experiencing a moment of immortal happiness, to prepare them for partaking of it evermore with her? For the sensation of youth, health, and happiness, with the keen perception of good things, gives an elasticity and radiance to the heart, that takes it straight up to the throne of that Being "who has Truth for his Body, and Light for his Shadow." We taste what we may be, and in tasting refine our nature. How felicitous is that natural piety which experiences no sensation without an uplifting of the soul either in gratitude or praise, a piety that comforts because it is ever there, gaining strength from copious overflowings, a piety that is spontaneous, impulsive, prompted by the very richness of its spring!

Blessed with the gift of godliness, nothing passes unheeded. There is a carefulness in such characters not to displease, as there is the strong desire to please. In nothing do they dwell alone, but live in a state of brotherhood with all. Their ideas of life and its duties are not bound by a circle, but they rather consider the dominions of love and usefulness to be infinite as the sea, and their duties countless as the sand on the shore. Capable of every affection, they cannot understand the natures that are only interested in what centres in themselves.

“Greatness,” my father taught us, “is natural to the soul of man. His upright stature should be token of the uplifting of his thoughts.”

“Make your religion, my children,” he would say, “the Pole-star to guide you over hills of difficulty, and to beckon you up the dark valleys of doubt and superstition. Let it not be in your hands a stern and unrelenting

finger-mark, turning that which is sweet into bitterness, what is nourishing, to poison. Remember the star of the Apocalypse, which, falling ominously on brooks, rivers, and fountains, changed their refreshing waters into wormwood. Let Religion fill your hearts and minds with a perceptible presence, overflowing with light and love at a joyous and happy time, but concentrating its powers into drops of divine essence, in sorrow and charity."

Taught thus, the new feeling of the perception of beauty, just awakened in a childish mind, brought forth a glow of enchantment that was never to be wholly erased. On the contrary, an eager desire to feed and regale it became predominant. Henceforth all things formed themselves into pictures before my mind, invested with all the beauty that a vivid imagination may lend to reality without sacrificing truth. Truth, indeed, was requisite, "as apples of gold in pictures of silver;" for

without it they faded like the moonbeams
before the coming light of dawn — cold —
shadowless — gone !

This my first dream of the wonders and
delights of beauty was broken in upon by
the entrance of our father.

CHAPTER II.

“ Oh ! Fate is kind to those who strive
To make existence pleasant,
With harmless joys and simple tastes,
And kindness ever present.” C. MACKAY.

“ My children, let us ride to-day,” he said.

“ Gladly, father,” they uttered simultaneously.

“ And the child ?” he asked interrogatively, missing the sign of my assent.

I pointed to a heap of neglected lesson books.

In all things loved, petted, and indulged, yet certain rules it was understood were never to be infringed.

I brought down the wandering senses,

soaring after visions, and concentrated them upon the business of the hour, while my sisters, with hasty kisses of regret, ran to prepare for their ride.

My father stood beside me, with one arm holding me close to his embrace, yet in no other way impeding my work, but the rather assisting me, as he held the book, and I spelt over my lessons on my fingers.

He regretted, more than all of us together, the mischance that divided our little society, and as my sisters appeared equipped for their ride, simultaneously with the announcement of the horses, he said, "Come."

This I knew meant that I was to go to the door and see them depart, which I did, remaining in sight until their figures were lost to me by a turn of the road, my father lifting his hat with a farewell gesture towards me.

As I returned through the great hall, keenly feeling the disappointment, the cause of my

idleness flashed on me. Again my eyes revealed to my mind an indelible picture of beauty, in the quaint old hall, from the centre of which diverged an oaken staircase wide enough for the track of a carriage up and down its shallow steps. On its massive balustrades lay the rosebuds lately blooming in my sisters' hair, and as they rested there, supported in their fragile delicacy by oaken beams that could have upborne the house itself, the contrast delighted me. A moment's pause, a happy thought, but not to be indulged at further risk of greater loss. I finished my lessons, and then, not without gladness that I should please others in pleasing myself, I ran to the garden for the means to carry out the "happy thought."

It was my father's wish that we ruled conjointly with him, and that the orders of even the "child of the house" should be obeyed as if they were his own. It was for him, if we infringed the privilege, to forbid its exercise, but no servant was permitted

to question the propriety of anything we desired to be done.

Therefore in obedience to my wishes, a train of gardeners brought pots of flowers in full bloom and fragrance, with which we decorated the dark old staircase, until blossoms peeped out from every balustrade, and on the large oaken pillars, that marked each flight, a crowning pyramid of beauty and fragrance capped its pediment with an ornament of nature's carving. Pleased with the effect, I accepted as my due the garrulous admiration of the executors of my "happy thought."

The old hall seemed to brighten and smile under the influence of the rich colours and sweet odours it encircled in its embrace for the first time.

And the eyes of all the dead stuffed creatures on the walls glanced with a sort of life in them, as if it was pleasant to see once more the flowers and plants of the earth they had loved so well. Such is the

beauty of contrast. There is no outrage to the sight in youth and age together. The one beautifies the other. On the mouldering wall, what looks more lovely than the delicate fern, the warm verdant velvety moss, and the little clinging orange-coloured lichen?

On the old stag-headed oak, bared by centuries, and knotted with age, clings the bright, vigorous, healthful ivy, rampant with its redundancy of life, festooning its ancient friend with garlands of green, and crowning its hoary head with its brightest and youngest shoots.

And so with my old staircase, that so late stood bare, confident in its own massive beauty, now blushing with a thousand blooms, that were dimly reflected back on its dark shining surface, doubling themselves again and again. A little delicate moss-bud lays its confiding head against the round moulding of a balustrade, kissing, as it were, a little twin sister. A

stately white lily stands erect and tall, by a bulging grim old sea-god, whose scaly tail winds down the staircase in many folds, appearing and disappearing amidst the pots of flowers. A redundant vine, laden with broad leaves, and purpling clusters of grapes, hangs over each side, while the pots themselves are twined with wreaths of ivy, until the plants appear to spring out of an ivied bed.

Satisfied with my work, I brought down our old nurse to pass judgment thereon, and, leaving her to exchange words with those who happily had the power to do so, I proceeded to the garden, and from thence to a temple, built on a rising piece of ground in the park.

My father would, I knew, look for my figure under the colonnade, and to heed his wishes was the service of our lives.

Sloping down from the temple was a smooth green sward, at the bottom of which ran a narrow stream, which gradually ex-

panded into a considerable sheet of water, that half surrounded our house. At one end was an ornamental boat-house, and a fringe of woods skirted the lake on the north-eastern side; but smooth velvety banks, with a succession of green terraces from the house, gave it an air of sylvan beauty that only needed figures of grace and gaiety to realise a picture of Watteau's. As I looked down, I peopled the slopes and terraces with groups of dames and cavaliers,—the trains of the ladies, and the long feathers in the hats of the cavaliers, as they courteously doffed them, alike sweeping the ground as they passed to and fro; while from out of the casements in our many windowed house, framed in the carved sills, looked many lovely faces and gallant forms.

The house cast a broad shadow on the lake, the battlements round the roof being reflected back on its bosom, as if cut by mortal hand in adamantine stone. Three stories high, and roofed up with so sharp a

pitch that three tiers of windows lighted the dome, it had a most imposing appearance, yet was more beautiful than grand. Beautiful in its old English quaintness, its grey stone, its cheerful open casements, the clustering roses, myrtles, and magnolias that climbed in rich luxuriance even to the upper windows. It was beautiful in its air of home, its quiet grace, the exquisite verdure, with the sunshine of gladness over everything.

Behind the house rose an abrupt hill, clothed to its very summit with beech-trees, here and there an opening, through which the sunbeams sent long golden rays, gilding the old roots and branches with a burnished hue.

Beyond the lake was the park, undulating over many acres, intersected with avenues, a winding road,— and ornamented with knolls of trees: oaks and larch standing alone in solitary beauty, the pendent branches of the latter sweeping low on the sward.

The sky illuminated all, with its pure celestial blue,—floating clouds just passing between earth and heaven, as if they were the mantles of the guardian angels, left there, as descending, they now whispered thoughts of the other world into the earth-eaten heart of man.

We, the three sisters, knew no other home, had visited no other country. The love of change had not yet awakened a longing in our hearts. It might be that our home satisfied all our desires; its beauties never palled, its comforts were boundless, and the happiness of our lives had never been broken.

But I see figures through the trees. They are returning from their ride; emerging from the avenue by the great oak-tree, they will catch the first glimpse of the temple, of me, standing under the colonnade. My father salutes me by removing his hat, my sisters wave their handkerchiefs.

There is so much love to be divided among us, that even this short absence has borne the appearance of a long parting, and I must run down to meet them at the hall door. Then they show me that I have not been forgotten. Mabel gives me a handful of the *Campanula Patula*, scarcely sensible that its fragile life has been torn from the parent root, so carefully has she carried it; and Pamela brings the long pendants of the lady-fern, with which she knows I can weave coronets for their hair; while my father draws forth a bunch of young nuts, that I might judge how ripe the summer was growing, and how soon we might go a-nutting.

Then they looked into my eyes, and read that I too had thought of them, and my sisters gave me their hands, to lead them to their surprise. Our father followed, and we all stood in the great hall, before the oaken stair-case. Then in their delight, I tasted my pleasure twice over.

“The darling child,” said Mabel, “what taste she has!”

“And the sweetness of everything!” exclaimed Pamela.

While my father stroked my curls, and murmured out low words expressive of pleasure.

“Aladdin with his wonderful lamp could not have desired anything more lovely,” asked Mabel of our father.

“No,” he answered. “If we wish it, we can all rub the lamp of imagination and invention; happy those who, divining, need no genii to execute their wishes. We will search further into Eastern habits, as, though Imagination is thought to be the fool of the house, she is not to be despised, but the rather courted with pretty notions, and encouraged by the soft arts of love. See, the child has conveyed us to Ceylon. Ripe fruit hangs side by side with blooms, her oaken trellis is garlanded with flowers, while we pluck our grapes from amid them.”

“She must be crowned this evening with the chaplet of favour, father,” said Mabel.

“So be it, let us reward merit on the instant.”

CHAPTER III.

“I come from far,
I ’ll rest myself, O world! awhile on thee ;
And half in earnest, half in jest, I ’ll cut
My name upon thee, pass the Arch of Death,
Then on a stair of stars, go up to God.”

A. SMITH.

THE antecedents of our family might be traced through a series of records or journals, which, begun by the first owner of Lovel-leigh, had been carried on with something of a religious exactitude. We were familiar with the whole of them, beginning with that of Sir Linton Lovell, knight, to our paternal grandmother’s, which was the most voluminous of them all. Nothing was done in our day by our father regarding his estates, without reference to these

records. He seemed to have more reverence for the opinions of his forefathers, than for the modern advice of lawyers and agents. It was part of our education to examine and copy out the memoranda that he required, and in this manner, we had become so intimately mixed up with the chronicles of the family, that they were almost as familiar to us as if we had lived, loved, and suffered with them.

The habits and thoughts of those from whom we were descended appeared so strangely like our own, we scarcely remembered the lapse of time, but the more readily inherited the family ways, as well as name and blood. It did not appear that we were or ever had been conspicuous for eminent virtues or startling vices. There was no legend of chivalry, no romance of loyalty, no tradition of life laid down at the shrine of religion, country, or king. At the same time, there was not the trace of a stain on the name of any Lovell con-

ected with us. We appeared to have been always respected, and if not much beloved, it would seem we deserved little, because we gave none out of our own family. Without being self-sufficient or cynical, the sin of our race appeared to be seclusion from the rest of the world,—not arising from churlishness or austerity, but the rather from an indolent shyness. From the opening remark of our ancestor, Sir Linton, this sin can be traced through every record up to our grandmother.

“It hath pleased God our Father to give peace in this realm of England, with a rightful king to rule the land. I design then to use my moneys for the good purpose of buying an estate, that my son and lawful heirs may think well of me. It hath long pleased mine eye, this land of Lovel-Leigh; it is furnished with fair pasturage, and a goodly house, and much richness of fair wood, with great trees; and is the more desirable through a

furnishing of fair water, running with a gentle speed through the land. Also, to my mind, it is well that it stands alone, unneighoured by house or burgh, wherein might be much ill-comfort, seeing that we have no means to move, and that our fair house and goodly pasture might ill-content us, through the villain ways of those from whom we may not be rid; and so my moneys had well remained in my coffer, seeing that out of it they brought me nought but vexation and great troubling of spirit. For my mind is to dwell at peace, with my good wife, and my fair children, seven in all, with the two serving wenches, Gregory my servitor, with Dickon the boy. To which I mind to add another wench, and a hind for my land, with a good worthy upper man to guard and watch all for me, as my second self, and who shall serve as pot-fellow, when my mind is for company. And my wife will have her wenches, and the little

maidens her daughters, and much labour and contentment of ordering her house, which is a fair large one, and so will haply catch time in pleasant works."

Forty years later, his son and successor writes thus:—

"It hath happed that this hath been a time of grievous dolour to my wife and me. Nathless the sin is not of ours, inasmuch as we sought not that which came to us; but out of good hearts and godly fellowship welcomed our worshipful neighbour of Warleigh, who journeyed in his coach from his own house, to give us gracious greeting as he saith; and madam his lady, journeyed with him, together with the young gentleman their son, and the three young misses their daughters; and waiting on them were servant wenches two, with a man, a horse, of which it was needful for so great a journey to take six. And besides this notable company there were of running footmen two, a goodly number

for mine house in orderly times ; but as it then fared, we were in no manner of ways fitted for the half of them. But insomuch as they had insensed us betimes that such was their purpose, sending a before man on a pad over-night, it did seem as it would be right courtesy and evil mannered to say them nay. But the entertaining of company was never to my mind or that of my good wife ; we did think this life but too short to entertain each other, and had so much complacency one for the other, we could never too much oblige each with the company of the other. In verity we thought that day a lost one, in which we missed a pleasant parlance together ; and did send our little varlets with their sisters early to roost, that we might more evenly converse. But as the worshipful Squire of Warleigh did say in that writing, wherein he did advise us of his coming :—

““What cheer, neighbour Lovel, what cheer ? but six miles parted, and my dame

and thine have not bragged their silken gear to each other, or matched their crowing cockerels and pretty poulets. We will pay thee the primus courtesy; and knowing thy good house of Lovel-Leigh well conditioned, of fair size, and fitly caparisoned, we will not pay thee that ill thought of scanty fare and hasty usage; but the rather see with our eyes that the master of Lovel-Leigh hath not gained an honoured name for right good deeds and worthy manners by nought.'

"We had ever a fair table, and the plenishing of the chambers was that excellent, as never in a king's house could be better lodgment. Yet grievous mishaps did ensue, and my good, dear wife hath not yet wiped away the tears of shame.

"Madam of Warleigh hath been to Court, and is much given to fashion and greatness, and though my good lady did lace on her best paduasoy, and donned her Brussels suit, she did but look at most in a strange

heat and fluster; and being new to the modes and ways of visiting, did, all unwotting, trouble and disquiet those she did strive to pleasure; and it seemed to me our honoured guests were in more haste to go, than to come.

“They had set out by six of the clock, and after divers mishaps, they made a grand entry into our court of Lovel-Leigh; the which so affrighted my little maids, that they one and all screeched, fleeing away with great vigour and past the hearing of any words of mine or their mother; and so the little misses of Warleigh did gaze around in much amaze, as if a sudden horrid devil had broke loose and scared my maids. And Linton, our heir of Lovel-Leigh, did seem of some sort taken like his sisters with an inward quaking—for he did stand all amost like to a clown; while methought the young varlets of Warleigh had a pretty modest air with them, and would fain have sworn a friendship. So

we passed in to the withdrawing room; and it would seem, it being noon of the day, that my dear and good wife should have handed our lady guest to her chamber; but in all things she esteemed it most courteous that my lady should say her own will. So we were called to our nooning, and my lady sat down with unwashen hands, and the dust of her journey yet thick upon her; which was a thing, her wenches told ours, the most of all others her chiefest dislike. So down we sat, with much constraint of manner, and truly it was a most honest representment of that within our hearts; for my mind was evilly stirred through the coyness and ill manners of my children, the which did mow and peep, and had no manner of breeding but that of extraordinary ill-favour; the which was the more grief to me as they did never before rise in me such vapours, but were as honest and knowledgable fair children as father might desire. And inasmuch as I felt in

great perplexity and wonder, minded to fetch out my rod, I did fail to entertain my worshipful guest in an honourable and kindly manner, but the rather did chafe and answer unwarily, the trouble of mind overmastering my courtesy. And as it so happed, in the overmuch care of my good wife, that none should unaware have reason to cavil at her housewifery, so was our repast of a wearisome and extraordinary duration, wherein was provided as much victual as might serve a Lord Mayor's feast. And by reason of much serving in the kitchen, and no masterful head, as in common days was my wife's usage, it fell out as but little of what was served could stand the tasting. Of a chine of beef it seemed to me that it had but smelt of the fire; and two great and fine poulets were as if the heat had devoured them, bones and all. We had some pasties, and part of a kid, and many other fine and good dishes, had they been but used well in the serving.

I did hope, as time went on, my children would fain have let their belly forget their evil manners, but it was not to be ; if they had been certain savage wild beasts, not less could they have eaten up their guests with dazed eyes. And when my worshipful friend of Warleigh did through very weariness nod and snort in his sleep, they did laugh, as if it were a show that was of very deed done for their pleasure."

And so our ancestor gives a long and minute description of "divers like mischances," the which led him to opine that in very deed company was not to his mind, or to the liking of his wife ; though perchance it would be well for the children did they see the ways of the world ; the which had they done more, their manners might give him greater contentment, "as truth to say I was verily ashamed of that which I had begotten of my own body."

It does not appear, however, that they acted upon this short experience ; for none

of his children seem to have left the parent wing, but died at home, most of them early, the two sons alone marrying.

Their diary is but scant, referring more to the buying and exchanging of land, "whereby this fair estate of Lovel-Leigh, of all estates far and near, was the likeliest and best ordered of any that could be named."

There were entries to show that the generosity and good deeds of the family kept pace with its welfare, and that in public gifts, such as for churches, roads, bridges, and other conveniences, they always held a good place, showing that they were public-spirited men, though they held themselves aloof from intercourse with their kind.

In the reign of the second George, the family sin is nearly uprooted through the violent love of the young heir for the daughter of my Lord Pomeroy, which led to many and divers meetings between my Lord Pomeroy and Squire Linton Lovel of

Lovel-Leigh, ere it could be arranged. And when it was finally concluded, much feasting and great entertainments took place, and it was recorded that the young bridegroom should say, "None should hear of this happy day and not rejoice thereat." And the young ladies of Lovel-Leigh, two in number, were much courted, and so wounded the hearts of the town lords with their pretty innocence and simple ways, that the ladies of the Court were minded to put on wimples and go a-milking, if so that by any means they could rival the roses and lilies in the fair faces of the Mistress Lovels. But a warning seems hinted at, for the records of this life are closed by a brother of the husband of the young Lady Pomeroy; and it is after this fashion:

"And so the end hath come, and I have borne my good brother to his abiding place, resting assured that God of his good mercy hath his soul in safe

keeping. He lies between his pretty babes, slain, as he could not but know, through an ill judgment of the ways of children. My lady sister did love her dogs, and her monkey, and had divers rare and quaint fancies on which she spent the days; but, alas! for my pretty nephews, they did puke as young chickens who have lost their mother, and my good brother thanked God at times, that He sent him no more heirs, to be harried out of the world with whims, and conceits, and ways ill assorting with young life. At his feet lie my two fair sisters; the one died of a home-sickness, the which did early slay her, after her marriage with my Lord Privy Seal; a great marriage, but I question if she had heart to go in it. And so I did ask of her, in good time, to break it off. But no, it seemeth that a madness takes the senses in regard of the world, its pleasures and state; and I fear me, she paid dear for her short taste thereof. And beyond question,

Belle, the gentler and lovelier of the two, died through a wound in her heart, that was pierced through by no less a man than her own husband. For the which may God forgive Sir John, and grant me grace to do the same. But I fear me, Death will be a-knocking at my door, ere I, for very fear, may pray this heartily.

“My lady sister doth decline the country-house of Lovel-Leigh, so with her good pleasure I will abide therein, and leave her this town-house, wherein she much delighted. And I conclude, inasmuch as she was so dearly loved of my brother, and comes of so honourable a family, that she shall have it free of all charge ; the which will keep her behoden to me, and in a manner my good sister ; therewith shall arise a tie between us, that for my brother’s sake, I would not see broken ; for she is a tricksy lady, and only to be held by the cord of obligation.

“ So now to my home of Lovel-Leigh, the

which place I inherit greatly to my dolour; but I will the more act as if my good brother did abide with me, as aforetime we did, in happy youthful days."

This Lovel appears to have been a man of active habits, fond of curious experiments; and though he inherited the love of home and constitutional shyness, his great attainments caused him to be much sought after, and his company greatly valued and desired.

Also his lady sister took his daughter to Court, where she made a fine marriage; and, on the whole, the family appear to have been highly respected and much regarded, so that at no former period or after were they held in greater consideration.

But the son of this Lovel, after his father's death, made an unequal marriage, and the family fell back, and lived in greater seclusion than ever, until his son married our grandmother, who was an orphan,

wealthy, and greatly distinguished for beauty, learning, and sense. She lived much in the world, and drew our grandfather, shyer than all the Lovels yet known, through, it is supposed, the shame of his mother's connections, into the best society, which he was well qualified to enjoy, and in which to shine. He was an only child, and his aunt the Countess having no heirs, the hopes of all the Lovels centred only upon him. It was through his aunt's care that he made this excellent marriage, whereat all rejoiced, until years went on, and it became almost a certainty that the race of Lovel would die out. They had no children.

CHAPTER IV.

“Look at me, with thy large brown eyes,
Philip, my king !
For round thee the purple shadow lies
Of Babyhood’s regal dignities :
Lay on my neck thy tiny hand
With love’s invisible sceptre laden ;
I am thine Esther to command,
Till thou shalt find thy Queen handmaiden — Philip,
my king !”

ANON.

AFTER nineteen years’ marriage, when, like Abraham and Sarah, they had ceased to pray for children, an Isaac was given to my grand-parents.

He came at a time of life when the excitements and pleasures of the world had somewhat lost their zest, while the energies and labours necessary for the well-doing of

their estates were almost irksome; as such things are when unhallowed by duty, or uninspired by a motive.

The calm monotony of age was stealing over their lives, when they were startled into fresh youth, activity and hope by the birth of their son.

The rod of chastening we are taught to kiss in pious subjection, the weight of woe driving us helpless to the Cross. Yet are there cold, lukewarm hearts, that can only be thrilled into warmth by a great and unexpected blessing—hearts, apathetic, numbed by indolence or riches, hearts that look upon misfortunes as so much ill-luck or fate. These bear evil with a stolid endurance that but encrusts them with more stony prejudices, hardening that which was too hard before.

But outpour upon them unexpected happiness, and like an ice-bound river breathed on by the soft breezes of summer, the frost is broken up, the numbed feelings melt;

the chill becomes a glow, and warmed into fervour, a thousand buds and blooms spring up into life.

Our grandmother seemed to have been a good woman, more by intuition, and an absence of evil in her disposition, than from principle or duty. She was an admirable wife, a kind sincere friend, truthful, beneficent; but only on the birth of her son did she discover that all these virtues were negative in their real effect, until wakened up into life by the touch of divinity.

She had to thank God for the gift of him. What mortal could have borne the ever repeated, and never-ceasing thanksgiving that her gratitude prompted her to pour forth in one continued flow!

She had to pray for his welfare. From none other than a God could she hope to obtain all the blessings she required for her boy.

She had to beseech boons for herself, a wise and discerning spirit, so that the

“ gift child ” might learn nothing at her hand, but “ to grow in wisdom and in stature, and in favour both with God and man.”

And that no relapse might take place in her heart, the well-doing of her “ jewel above price,” engrossing her to the exclusion of higher thoughts, a little daughter was given to her, only long enough possessed to take an imperishable place in her mother’s heart. As she bent over its little coffin, sorrowing, yet rejoicing, death was disrobed of its gloomy mantle—his wings would be tipped with the golden hues of joy—his dart would give her ineffable content, as restoring to her arms a treasure she had lost. Heaven so far distant, heretofore so indistinct, assumed the aspect of a home longed for, wherein she should again possess her little babe, now clothed with the robes of immortality, evermore her own.

To fit herself for this future home became now the business of her life; and if in the

endeavour to essay all things, she erred somewhat, her sins hurt but herself, so gentle, charitable, and forbearing was she to all others. Her religion was neither harsh nor unlovely, though it became all-pervading; it was neither intrusive nor glaring; but it broke spontaneously from a heart sunny with happiness, and overflowed out of its very bounty. We liked to read her diary, which was so voluminous that it filled twenty-six rather thick volumes. She saw a charm and a good in everything, and it appeared not only natural but requisite that she should animate others by the force and vivacity of her observations. It was more the wish of our grandfather than hers, that our father was wholly educated at home.

Thus she writes :

“ It would be like parting with the best half of myself, my very heart must go with him, leaving me cold, life-weary, until I saw his beloved face again. But my judgment

bids me decide that Linton should go to school. Already he shows symptoms of constitutional shyness, and a love of home and books, which exceeds even that of his father for them. For his own sake, we should send him out into the world. He was not given us for our happiness only, but to carry on the name of Lovel, and with it, all its duties."

A little later:

"I know not whether to grieve or rejoice; my dear Mr. Lovel will not hear of Linton's leaving us. He argues that we are old, and that by the time he is educated, we shall have passed the allotted age of man, and be summoned from his companionship just as we think to enjoy it. Moreover, his constitution and nervous system are both delicate. If harm should occur to my boy, away from the care and love poured on him here! My God, pardon me in this thing: if I have too little faith, grant me more; Thou gavest him to us in

our old age. In keeping him near us while we live, pardon us if we err, and let the sin fall on our hearts, rather than his. And so I am never to part with him, but by the will of God or his own. What hoards of delight accumulate beneath my mind's eye, as I think of this happiness! He has been mine from his birth, until now, ten delicious years; I may, with God's leave, keep him still, and see him pass from boyhood to youth, perhaps manhood. Sow the seeds, watch them bud, judge for myself of the beauty of the bloom, the richness of the fruit, that is to rise again for immortality. Ah! what can life bestow of greater happiness than this? What are its joys, its honours, its riches and delights, to that feeling in a mother's heart, who has a good son? She has given birth to, reared, trained an Adam for the New Garden of Eden. And God has breathed upon him, and said, 'Behold it is good.' "

So our father was educated at home,

and under his correct and refined taste, grew up a scholar as learned as his father, imbibing such large quaffs of intellectual pleasure, that he coveted nothing better than the world could give him. As part of his education they spent three months in every year travelling, and the detail of all these expeditions is duly chronicled by our grandmother.

As he approached manhood, and she records her gratitude and happiness that they are spared to be with him so long, we trace hints as to the hope that they may see him happily wedded. In one or two instances it is plainly stated :—

“I have urged my dear Mr. Lovel to accept this second invitation to Warleigh, for as Linton will not go without us, we might miss some happy good for him. I hear the house is full of young people, and I especially wish to see my little connexion, Miss Deane. I find it in my heart to almost imagine her my daughter.”

And after the visit, we read :

“ Am I too fastidious for my Linton, or do the manners of the young people of the present day displease me ? I love young folks, but they must be ingenuous, with the light hearts of youth, joined to a grave reverence for truth. None can be too merry for me, yet may they not be too free ; modesty may be too frank, and mirth overflow to pertness. I think the young ladies of the present day strive to tread too quickly into the shoes of their mothers. My little Miss Deane has a wayward frown at times, which already retains a place on her fair countenance. I see she cares for Linton’s good word, but I doubt if she has the sense to discern that it is worth having, even at the cost of her little whims. She is a woman unballasted, all unconscious of her noble rank in God’s army of Christians. She has no soul that she has ever felt as yet, but is moved to deeds even as

a very butterfly playing in the sunshine,—all lost and stranded in stormy weather."

Our grandmother had, in youthful years, before she married, been kind to a young girl distantly connected to her. Out of her own portion she has spared sufficient to enable this girl to marry, and proceed to Ceylon, where her husband was employed as superintendent of a coffee plantation. She died in her adopted country, after living there for eighteen years and never returning to England, or seeing her benefactress again. She had been the mother of one girl, who, marrying in Ceylon at the age of fifteen, also died, leaving a little girl, six years of age. Our grandmother kept up a regular correspondence with the husband of her cousin, who survived his wife many years. But so far from time effacing the remembrance of what she had done for his wife, Mr. Seaton suffered no opportunity to pass, that did not mark his desire to keep up the corre-

spondence; costly presents of all kinds were being continually sent by him to Lovel-Leigh, and in the letters that passed between them, Mr. Seaton took every opportunity to engage Mrs. Lovel's interest for his little grand-daughter, who lost her father before she was fifteen.

Shortly after the date of the last paragraph quoted from my grandmother's journal, there is this entry:—

“Received to-day from good Mr. Seaton a letter, advising us of the coming of a suite of drawing-room furniture, made of Calamanca wood. He is really too generous. I fancy from the description it will suit the octagon room, which I have always pleased myself by thinking should be the boudoir of my son's wife. Mr. Seaton talks of his declining health, and his anxiety about his grand-daughter, now seventeen years old. I think my dear Mr. Lovel must permit me to tell Mr. Seaton to be under no uneasiness about her; or

the rather, I will advise him to come to England with her. He says he shall be able to leave her a fortune of ten thousand pounds. Upon the interest of that they could live very well, and perhaps we may be able to furnish them with a house."

Four months after this we read as follows:

" My dear son, having lately shown symptoms of great weakness, partly the consequence of his rapid growth, and the long cold spring following a most severe winter, has been advised to take a sea voyage, by way of bracing his constitution. As we all of us naturally dreaded so great a separation, Mr. Lovel has hired a small yacht; in that Linton thinks to cruise round the coast of England, which his doctor pronounces as likely to answer the end he proposes; which, with the blessing of God, I pray for. He can turn his weakness into strength, if such be His good will.

" I had well-nigh wished myself a young

woman again, that I might have joined him, for the weather is now as genial as I ever experienced, and methinks a little straying from home has a mighty efficaciousness on the spirits. We that live at home are scarcely alive to the vast influence of this small island over the rest of the world. This sea-bound, densely-peopled land, so insignificant on the map, so infinite in its social relations—ubiquitous, for who can measure its shores or put a boundary to its possessions? —how we should love it! Next to being a Christian, I thank God I am an English woman, with a brave spirit to dare and do all that the Almighty may command and permit. Does this energy and life—so conspicuous in the English race—belong in a particular manner to islanders? It would be a good study to make out this theory from the history of other islands. Though my dear Mr. Lovel will have his answer ready:

“To the winds with your theory. If all

islanders are braver, more daring, more resolute than the inhabitants of continents, where are England's rivals? She ought to have many. Borneo, for instance, fifteen hundred miles in circumference, with fine rivers, iron, tin and loadstones in its mountains, and, what England has not, brilliant diamonds, and eatable birds' nests. But Borneo we will forego. Eight months of rain in the year would be quite sufficient to damp the most energetic race, though I believe the "Beaujus," as they call themselves, are upon the whole civilized people, compared with other savages. There is New Holland, New Zealand, Madagascar, one thousand miles long, and three hundred broad, spoken of by Pliny as Cernè, supposed to be the Menuthiasde of Ptolemy. Now this is an island with natural beauties and advantages that are generally scattered in units over other lands. Cascades rivaling Niagara, beauty of scenery that might belong to Italy, fertility of soil unknown in

any other land. Ebony and rare woods lavishly springing in every direction. The merest labour produces a hundred-fold. The inhabitants hospitable, simple, not idolaters, but the rather imbued with the religious tenets of the Old Testament, as ordained by Moses for the use of the Jews — though with them the head of the house is priest, judge and father in one. Why do they not rival England ? I surmise, because they have so little need for exertion. Their energies are not called forth by labour, and their dispositions are quiescent also. As they have no great virtue, so they have no great vice, but remain stationary, at peace with each other and all the world. Now in Britain we must labour, and that with brains as well as hands, to turn the riches of our little island to the best advantage. And we are indebted to our country being an island for the greater part of our prosperity. In the first place, we are a free people, yet being islanders we must be

united by a bond of union. No country can encroach upon our land, or cramp our energies by constant warfare and interference. We have a boundless highway, which so far from costing us anything to repair, is a source of wealth, and a great cause of the hardy and intrepid race, that we pour forth so unceasingly into all parts of the world. We are not affected by winds, for let them blow either way, the centre of our island benefits by the one coast or the other. And so, my dear wife, if Linton had wished to know wherefore England is so prosperous, he will be able to answer when he returns to us from visiting her coasts and harbours.'

"Such would be his reply doubtless, and my Linton would sit and smile at his mother, while he prompted his father to stun me quite with the statistics of every known island, their habits and customs.

"But to return from this long digression to the origin of it. I am especially pleased at the desire Linton expresses to know his own

island from end to end. And more especially her coast. From the little I have seen, I conjecture that he will have a most interesting time of it. Moreover, he will see new faces, different manners, and will probably lose some of the shyness that rather grows upon him than lessens. How sadly he requires a more youthful companion than either his father or mother! For this, beneficent Father, do I pray, having all faith in that power who bestowed on us the gift of his existence. But not unasked are we to obtain blessings. Therefore, O thou unwearied One, hear, hear the prayers of a mother for her son — be with him in the hour of temptation, in the moment of danger, grant him his heart's desire, and fulfil all his mind, for Christ sake. Amen."

From this time for two months, there are extracts from Linton's letters, more or less interesting. At the end of that time, they appear to have joined him for a short time at Torquay, a place, he fancied, would benefit his father's failing strength.

CHAPTER V.

“ All round and through the spaces of creation,
 No hiding-place of the least air or earth,
 Or sea, invisible, untrod, untrained on,
 Contains a thing alone.

Not e'en the bird,
 That can go up the labyrinthine winds
 Between its pinions, and pursues the summer.”

BEDDOES.

THE following extract has proved to record an event of more importance to us, the unborn, than to those who regarded it personally with so much interest:

“ I pray God to receive my hearty thanks, as I record the mercy He has vouchsafed us in again receiving such happy letters from my son. And my eyes fill with tears of joy when I reflect that he

has been the means, under God, of saving a life. He says but little himself, yet I doubt not he fully merits all that his new young friend says. May the life preserved prove acceptable to God, and be, both here and hereafter, a never-failing source of comfort and congratulation to my dear son. My prayers seem to be answered, for never before did Linton express himself so warmly in praise of an almost stranger ; while the impulsive letter of the young man, breathes of an ardent sensibility that excites our interest before we have even seen him. I picture him to myself (Linton says he has the handsomest face he ever saw, too beautiful for a man), bright, joyous, and overflowing with spirits, the very companion for my learned, too grave Linton. But I would we knew the cause wherefore he had to leave the other vessel at the so near risk of his life. 'He was in danger,' he saith, 'and cast himself forth.' What was that danger? It may be that

Linton already knows it, and thinks it well not to trust the tale to a letter. He was ever so discreet. He is to bring him home with him. I long for the hour."

Three weeks later: "To-day we have received the intelligence that Mr. Seaton has suddenly arrived in England with his grand-daughter. We have written to beg their company as a favour."

"I have been surprised, almost startled, into an act of rudeness, and Mr. Lovel stands convicted of it. I refrained from exclaiming, but he uttered at once his admiration. I upbraided Mr. Seaton afterwards for not advising us beforehand of the beauty of his grand-daughter. She is unlike any one I ever saw. I can compare her to nothing but one of her own rose-coloured Ceylon pearls, she is so perfectly faultless. For answer he gave me none, only smiling significantly. I gathered from this smile that his silence had been premeditated.

“I pray God that the little lovely thing may prove as beautiful in the spirit as in the flesh. At the present it is scarcely fair to judge. She is affectionate, unselfish, you can see that in every action. She has no accomplishments, and Mr. Seaton allows her education has been limited, though it was the best he could obtain for her. He is a fine old man himself, bronzed much beyond anyone I ever saw. They mean to take rooms in Miss Theen’s house, who, now she has lost her mother, is so lonely she is glad to let part of it.” . . .

“I am surprised to see how completely Rose and Mr. Seaton have settled themselves in Clover Cottage.”

“‘Why not, Lady?’ he answered to my remark; ‘I mean to die here.’

“I murmured something about Miss Theen.

“‘Ah,’ said he, with his peculiar significant smile, ‘shortly I shall have the whole of Miss Theen’s house.’ He had

discovered that which no one about us had yet observed, that our agent, Mr. Clifford, intends persuading Miss Theen to migrate to his house. Mr. Seaton is a peculiar man, with a sagacity I should think rarely at fault.

“I can fancy that from Rose’s birth, perceiving the promise of her exquisite and peculiar loveliness, he has planned a scheme in his head, never losing sight of it for a day. And I can foresee that he will succeed. My little Rose, you are to be my daughter. The man with the indomitable spirit has willed it, and it will be done. Her grace, gentleness, and beauty are just what Linton will most admire. And if she is not clever, she is loving and warm-hearted.

“She is marvellously pretty, her complexion like the delicate pink cameo shell, and the features cut out with a faultless and unerring chisel from its fairest part. She has hands and feet like little gems,

and her hair of pale brown hangs about her little face like a soft cloud. She is made to be petted, kissed, and doted on. And out of the large heart that I know my Linton possesses, what a store of love he can shower upon her! Gracious God, how I thank Thee! Ere we leave him, my son may be in possession of a heart that will console him for the loss of his mother, and obtain the friendship and love of a brother, to replace that of his father. We could desire no more for him. How warmly he writes of his new friend! 'My Ferdy' he styles him now, so he has given him all his heart. I have followed Mr. Seaton's plan, and said but little of the lovely Rose. In a few weeks now we shall all meet. I am curious to see him who owes his life to my Linton."

"We have just returned from Clover Cottage,—Mr. Lovel and I find our steps continually turning that way,—he is gallantly making love by proxy for his son, to

the little Ceylon pearl. She is nestling surely and permanently in my heart. I begin to chafe at Linton's delay, prompted by young Ferdinand Home; he is cruising now amid the Western Isles. Some one may hear of our little beauty, and besiege her heart ere my son has seen her. Though we possess but few neighbours, and cannot boast of a populous vicinity, the rumour of beauty gathers the crowd together from afar. Such is the power of it—though scarcely acknowledged by the beauty-worshippers. I will nevertheless trust all to Mr. Seaton; he has guarded his treasure so long for one purpose, and is not likely to be less vigilant at the moment of fruition.

“He smiled his peculiar smile to-day, as he watched Mr. Lovel petting the little thing with all the love of a doting father; and he is too shrewd not to perceive how we love to look at her, and never part with her until we fix the hour to meet again.

“I have said she is not clever,—but

she has one or two peculiarities that may almost be called talents. One is—her taste. She has transformed Miss Theen's little square cottage into a bower of prettiness and elegance, entirely her own design. Give her a handful of flowers, and she will wreath them into a bouquet that delights the eye with its arrangement. Her love of flowers is a passion; she calls them her sisters, and cherishes them like pets.

“ This gift of taste extends itself to everything about her; in dress it is exquisite and peculiar. She will robe her head in a veil, and look like the loveliest little gem of a picture ever seen; she will entwine a piece of ribbon through her hair, and be more charming than before. Her light, flexible figure adapts itself to every dress, and is graceful in all. But above everything in this my daughter that (I pray God) is to be, I see a lovely spirit shining fair and clear through her serene eyes; she is as discriminating in all she says and does, as

if the pretty fancies of her brain arose from a just and thoughtful heart."

"Cast thy bread upon the waters and it shall return unto thee again."

"I underwent much persecution from my guardians concerning the sum I spared out of mine abundance for my young cousin, upwards of forty years ago; at the time when my dear Mr. Lovel, being told of this my wayward extravagance, with a view to alarm me by the withdrawal of his affections, on the contrary won my heart for ever, by saying he loved me the more for it. I think this 'bread' cast upon the waters is likely to return to us, increased a hundred-fold.

"Another letter from Mr. Home,—or Ferdinand, as I am besought to style him. He has bespoken a place in my heart for evermore, as if he was a younger son born to me; and that he may use worthily the life he so nearly lost, shall not be forgotten in my prayers."

Three weeks afterwards :

“ A beautiful bright boy, indeed, is young Ferdinand Home, he is all glowing with life and sunshine. I shudder now to think of the near extinction, by so violent a death, of this gay young spirit. He enlivens our house vastly, bringing out Linton’s low happy laughter continually. Before we saw him, we heard his joyous voice greeting the servants, and apostrophising the house, as if he was indeed coming home. I must excuse him if he is a little vain, and Narcissus-like, in love with his own handsome face ; that will wear off as he becomes more manly. He is eighteen years old, he says, four years younger than Linton,—and very boyish still in everything ; but it is a graceful youthfulness, arising out of very gaiety of heart. At present I am not disposed to cavil at anyone that Linton loves ; I have adopted ‘Ferdy’ for my son — henceforward this is his home—as much as he desires to make

it so. To-morrow I shall take them to Clover Cottage; I shall be more nervous than any of the party, I foresee."

"Mr. Seaton has wonderful sagacity. Yesterday evening, as we sat on the lawn after dinner, Mr. Lovel and I drinking in the sound of that voice that was sweeter to us than all music, he appeared with his granddaughter. She was dressed in her brown Holland frock and straw hat, just as she worked every day in her garden.

"He came, he said, to congratulate us upon the arrival of our son; what interested us was also of moment to him; and by this kindly identity with us, he commanded my shy Linton's gratitude at once, and before the hour was out they were more intimate than had Mr. Seaton waited to be sought. Little Rose, after the first introduction, sat at Mr. Lovel's feet, weaving fern-leaves and wild flowers into a wreath, with which she afterwards decorated her hat. I saw my son's eyes gazing,

gazing; read in them at first surprise,—admiration soon followed. Before the hour was out, a light effulgent and soft like a luminous glow beamed from them. The predestination of a divine life awoke in his heart at that hour.

“Meantime Ferdy, reminding me of my little pet bantam-cock, drew himself up, arranged his collar, thrust his fingers through his redundant curls, and then prepared himself for conquest. I saw into his innocent boy’s heart at once; for the time we were all forgotten,—he threw himself on the grass at her side, and devoted all his perfections to her service.

“In nothing has the little maiden pleased me better than the simplicity with which she received this ardent boy’s admiration. He is rather more perfect in the art of coquetting than I quite like. He is too young to be such an adept without having lost some of the innocence with which I have credited him.

“ ‘Would she give him a flower?’

“ ‘Yes, he might take which he pleased.’

“ ‘No, that he would not do. How could he value it unless she selected and gave it to him?’

“ She looked up, one little glance, half surprise, half reprobating. Then she swept them all into her lap again, as if to protect them from an unworthy touch.

“ ‘I love flowers for themselves,’ she answered, as he again supplicated her:

“ ‘How can I regard flowers, when you are near?’

“ ‘As I do, when you are near.’

“ Here he lowered his voice, so that I could not hear his words. But on her little mobile face floated a derisive smile, which caused him to be still more earnest, his whole face colouring with his own fervour. A fear shoots through me rapidly; for when awakened by misgivings, how vividly the imagination weaves one apprehension upon another!

“I foresaw this impulsive boy throwing his heart, throbbing wildly with love for this lovely creature, into her keeping. And she, too young, too timid to resist the impetuosity — and my Linton, grave, far-seeing, self-sacrificing, extinguishing for ever the glow of divine happiness that illumined for one short hour his heart.

“In the space of a few moments, I had woven for myself an unutterable fear and horror of the future, and was almost, as it were, ready to cry out with the anguish of my own imaginings, when I felt the cool soft lips of little Rose kissing me a ‘good night.’ They departed, she and grandfather, as they came, suddenly.

“Then from the voluble lips of the handsome boy flowed an unwearied spring of admiration and delight. He called upon us all, Linton especially, to affirm as he did, that she was the loveliest, fairest thing ever seen.

“What is her name, her Christian name?

I think so much of that ;' but before we could answer the presumptuous boy, he was again bursting forth in her praise.

“ But I saw my son Linton go to a rose-bush, and plucking therefrom the prettiest bud, he placed it within his waistcoat, out of sight.”

CHAPTER VI.

“She is of the best blood, yet betters it
With all the graces of an excellent spirit:
Mild as the infant Rose—and innocent
As when Heaven lent her us. Her mind, as well
As face, is yet a Paradise, untainted
With blemishes—or the spreading weeds of vice.”

ROBERT BARON.

“THERE is no question but that they both love her—Linton with every fibre of his heart and soul, and Ferdinand with the mad passion of an impetuous nature.

“This boy has been spoilt: he lost his parents early, and has been educated by a rich aunt, who doted on him. She is a single lady, and was co-heiress with his mother, her sister. While the one, Mrs. Home, either by her own will, or by her

husband's, squandered the greater part of her portion, the other sister, Miss Woodville, has accumulated great wealth,—as I understand, as much from forethought and good management as economy.

“ She seems a high-spirited woman from Ferdinand’s anecdotes, and at present he is not on terms with her. For what? This does not appear quite clear to me. Either he has spent too much money, or he accompanied a party of whom she did not approve, yachting. It was from their yacht he fell into the water the night my son rescued him. In his letter, he had said, he was in danger and threw himself forth. Now he declares it was accidental.

“ Oh ! my son Ferdinand, God hath need to be cried earnestly unto for thee. Thou art endowed with rare gifts of person,—what if there be a canker within so beautiful a frame? Thou art not truthful,—I trace this sin in many things; thou art selfish,—to what sins may not thine ardent

temperament lead thee, long ere thou perceivest the danger. I love thee; who can help it? I must beseech help for thee, daily, hourly, for there is no strength within thee to resist temptation."

"Mr. Seaton has just been with me.

"As we were alone, I could not resist speaking of that which lies so close to my heart; my fear of the attractions and devoted love of Ferdinand.

"He smiled as usual, that smile, which from its very calmness brings a sort of comfort with it.

"'My little Rose has already experienced a great deal of admiration; she knows how to value it, and to distinguish the true from the false.'

"And no more would he say, and in this he was right. The dignity of his child must be respected, and not even to gain the son would he ask the confidence of the mother.

"But what shall I do with this poor boy?

All day long he pours out his feelings to me, beseeching my aid and countenance.

“‘Tell me, tell me, do you think Mr. Seaton would give her to me, if I proposed to her?’

“‘Foolish boy, propose to her! you are but eighteen.’

“‘Oh, good heavens! no more I am. But I must have her, she shall be my wife. What course had I best pursue to secure her mine, on coming of age?’

“‘I have no opinion of any lover who would tie a girl down for so long a period at her age.’

“‘Oh, don’t! don’t say you have no opinion of me; I wish wholly to be guided by your advice. But I must have her, she must be mine: how every one will envy me!’

“‘That is not generally the motive for marrying.’

“‘Don’t laugh at me now, please don’t: of course I know it is not: but is she not

beautiful? Did you ever see such a skin,—such eyes? And then her hands and feet! Even Linton says she is perfection, which I have always intended my wife to be.'

"' You appear to have studied the matter betimes. I question if your senior, Linton, has even pictured to himself what wife he will have.'

"' Ah, he is so wise, so thoughtful,—some of these days we shall see him with a magnificent queen-like woman hanging on his arm, grave and wise as himself.'

"' And why not a little lovely laughing girl like Rose?'

"' No, no, not Rose. He shall not have Rose; he would not love her and pet her as I should do; Rose must be adored,—positively adored and worshipped as if she was a goddess. Now, can you picture Linton doing so?'

"' I can picture Linton loving his wife with the conscientious devotion of both soul and body, with a love that comprises

his life; for when it is severed, it will be when his last sigh escapes his lips. Linton will love more with the spirit than the body, exalting the human feeling into one divine.'

" 'I daresay, ah! I daresay; but that is not how Rose should be loved — the love-liest, prettiest, sweetest thing! Dearest Mrs. Lovel, my adopted mother, plead for me, speak for me; command Mr. Seaton to give her to me.'

" 'Without her own consent?'

" 'Ah! to be sure, that must first be done. You think I may speak to her—I long to do it, dear, lovely little Rose — how I should dote upon receiving her blushing consent! She could not refuse me, now, could she?'

" And though he demanded this question of me, I could see the dear, vain fellow had no doubts on the matter himself. He glanced at the mirror, and there was no disappointment as he turned away; on the contrary, an exultation, if I may so style it.

I pray God he may not love the shadow of indifferent things ~~to~~ the slighting of the most important. He lacks depth of character, but is so full of love and heartiness, I find myself excusing him at every turn; nevertheless, he must not have my little Rose."

"A tide has turned in Ferdinand's love. Rose is now cold-hearted—demure—reserved. Ferdinand must be loved to idolatry, ere he surrenders his liberty.

"Would you believe it, dearest Mrs. Lovel, I have risen for three mornings running, early—very early for me—to obtain for her fresh flowers before the dew is off, and she has only thanked me.'

"What did you expect her to do?"

"I expected her to be full of blushing ecstasies, to say all sorts of pretty things to me, to imply still more—and yet all I obtained was "Thank you."

"She did not beg you to do this for her.'

“‘ No ; but then she ought to have been the more grateful, don’t you think so ? If the gardener had done as much for her, she could not have been more impassive. Oh ! she has no heart.’

“‘ No heart ! see her with her grandfather !’

“‘ Of course she is very fond of him — too fond ; one is apt to think she is perhaps a little afraid of him, or thinking of the future.’

“‘ Now, indeed, you do not deserve Rose, thus belying so true an affection ; giving a sordid motive to one whose whole thoughts are sweet as roses, and fresh as the dew that bathes them.’

“‘ Do not be angry, dear Mrs. Lovel ; I know I am a sad brute ; but don’t you think her heartless, not to love me ?’

“‘ Let me see,—you have known her one day over a fortnight, during which time you have paid her the most assiduous court—’

“‘Assiduous! my dear Mrs. Lovel, I have been her veriest slave; no dog could have been more faithful or devoted.’

“‘Well! ’tis sad; I suppose I must allow she is cold; perhaps she has no heart to give.’

“‘No heart to give! I should like to see the fellow that would dare to riyal me.’

“‘Pooh, pooh! vain boy; I mean that her heart was given away before she saw your provoking physiognomy.’

“‘If I thought that, I would never give her up,—I would win her from every rival.’

“‘That is a sentiment I do not like; your love is of a very base sort, Ferdy, and not worth pining about. Go, quarrel with some one for a bit of the moon; you are not in love, and never have been, my dear.’

“‘Silly boy! his vanity has received a shock, and it will do him good; at present he loves nothing but himself, and I must

tell him so, or be no true mother to him. He saw this evening, as well as myself, little Rose receive a flower from my Linton. He gave it, half irresolutely, half courtier-like, colouring as girls do. Her little fingers eagerly clasped it, she did not look up, she did not say even 'thank you,' but a rosy hue tinted her face, until it rivalled the flower she held.

"Ferdy's eyes caught mine—he was at my side in a moment.

"'You see she did not even thank him,' he observed.

"Oh, blind boy! he has no more perception of the signs of true love than the insensible flower that was my Linton's first present to his love.

"And now, assured of Ferdy's indifference, he began to court her, after his fashion. That is happy courtship, nobly done, that does homage to feminine ways, by devoting itself to domestic pleasures. My Linton eschewed his beloved books,—tying roses,

feeding chickens, and collecting ferns and wild flowers in the stead thereof.

“ Hitherto a despiser of poetry, he bore a volume always in his pocket, that at happy moments, she resting, he might read aloud to her. We gave no sign of our hearts’ wishes, so they innocently fell into love’s ways before our eyes.

“ ‘ Did you prepare little Rose for loving my Linton?’ I asked of Mr. Seaton, one day.

“ ‘ God forbid, madam! I scarce think she knew his name until she saw him. I would not have desired to gain your son’s noble heart, for a bidden love. No, he has it as pure as the God who created it.’

“ ‘ She was not taken with Ferdinand Home’s boyish infatuation?’

“ ‘ No, that was teasing, she told me. My Rose has one fault. It is a nature too romantic or high-flown. Love with her will partake of something of the nature of her love for her God; she will blend the two

together in her soul, and never part them more. There will, after the first avowal of it, be neither judgment nor care left. Her whole individuality will be lost in that of her husband. This is what may be styled the devotion of woman. In Rose, it will amount to idolatry. But her love will not be avowed, until she is well assured none other being lives who deserves it more.'

"She has more character than I imagined, I mean in strength.'

"Yes, she will be strong in love, and she has good judgment at present. Reading aloud to me yesterday, she came to this remark: "He knows his place in the world, and suffers none to be above him, but through virtue—and none below him but by vice." 'That is the man, grandfather, whom you shall have for a grandson, if you can find him.'

"Not like Mr. Home?" I asked.

"Well, grandfather, second-rate characters are not to be despised, society wants

them. If all were noble pillars or structures, how would they be held together and united, without the second-rate characters to act as mortar, and cement them together? They make no great show, but are necessary.'

“‘That may be, child; but second-rate characters are not to be treated with contumely. I heard you laughing with Mr. Home the other day, as if on very pleasant terms with him.’

“‘He is so boyish, grandfather, his frankness does him more harm than good, as it shows the depth of his wit. We are told that man’s childhood is longer than that of any other living thing, for the better formation of his character. I hardly think Mr. Home will ever be anything but a gay-hearted boy, until he becomes a silly old man.’

“I have written this verbatim, for my son to see at some future day. I know it will please him, and remove from his mind any

little impression that may harbour there, (festering now and then), that he gained what might have been Ferdinand Home's. For it is not every girl who could have repelled so handsome a lover. And my Linton has but his soft dreamy eyes and beautiful hair to match against him. I shall be glad when this matter is settled. He is again looking sadly delicate." . . .

"Mr. Lovel wonders that our son is not more speedy in easing his own heart and ours. Methinks he delays through a lofty devotion, that bids him seek not to win her, until wooed worthily."

"God is most merciful, bountiful to overflowing, filling my cup of happiness, until it is brimming over. Let me thank Him on my knees.

"On this day, the 13th of October, at four o'clock, my beloved son came to us, his father and mother, leading the little Ceylon pearl, blushing like the changing hues in a western sky.

“ ‘Father, mother,’ he said, ‘this is my Rose, I give her to you as a daughter.’

“And the glow of ineffable happiness chased the grave look out of his eyes, making them brilliant and effulgent as stars.”

CHAPTER VII.

“ 'Tis ever thus—'tis ever thus—with creatures
heavenly fair,
Too finely framed to bide the brunt more earthly
natures bear ;
A little while they dwell with us, blest ministers of
love,
They spread the wings we have not seen, and seek
their home above.” CAROLINE BOWLES.

THESE extracts from our grandmother's journal have been necessary as the texts to our own history,—now collected together by me, and written out, to serve as lessons to those who may come after us. For three hundred years, the family had prospered,—their sin had not found them out. They had dwelt in their own home, respected in the limited circle to which they had confined themselves, and casting

love about on their own hearthstone, all the more lavishly because they bestowed it on none other.

A few words, together with some more extracts, will bring our history up to the day on which I forgot to learn my lessons, and decorated the old oak staircase with a garniture of flowers.

There is a long description of our father and mother's marriage in the Diary. It took place on the 30th of November; Ferdy Home was there, in brilliant spirits, the life of the party. This may in measure account for our grandmother scoring with pencil marks that part of her Diary, detailing his boyish admiration for our mother, and for casual remarks, such as these :

“ As usual, the volatile Ferdy must have a flirtation. I think pretty Miss Deane loves coquetting to the full as much as Ferdinand. I, therefore, need not be uneasy at his present devotion to her.” . .

“ When will that gay heart be smitten

in earnest? I tell Ferdy, I wish to see my youngest son married and settled before I go hence, to be no more seen on earth, and he snatches up my little granddaughter Pamela, and begs her to take pity on him, and be his wife. Whereat, the little innocent presses his face between her two little hands, and answers, lisping, 'Yeth, dear Ferdy, wid all my heart.'

"But who will love, as love Linton and Rose? She is his life, and he her Polar star. They are so one, that even in absence their souls appear to meet and exchange thoughts.

"To-day, Mr. Seaton reproved his granddaughter for making herself so absolutely necessary to the life and comfort of her husband.

"'If God should take you, child, do you mean to doom Linton to a never-ceasing loathing of life?'

"'No, grandfather,' she answered humbly, 'but he must miss me.'

“‘ And why not remember you for good rather than for anguish ?’

“‘ It would be the same, either way. Then pray God to spare me to him, grandfather.’

“‘ I do, child, I do. Do you think I have forgotten our hours of agony, when your babes were born. God bless you, Rose, God bless you ; your life is a frail thing, on which to trust such a mountain load of happiness.’”

The last extract in our grandmother’s handwriting is this :

“God has taken my beloved Mr. Lovel, after a long, peaceful, and I hope I may say, a happy life. I shall soon follow him. Perhaps, in His goodness, God may permit me to see my son’s son, an event we expect before the spring,—my little grand-daughters being now four years old.”

In a small delicate handwriting, our mother’s we knew, we read :

“Our dear mother was found to-day

stricken with paralysis, her pen still in her hand. God preserve her to us!"

Ten days later in the same handwriting:

"We have laid her by our father. God take their souls into His good keeping, and grant us grace so to live, that we may join them when we die a little later."

"Grandpapa is unhappy; he seems to me to be angry that he is so strong and well. Eighty-eight yesterday, and he walked four times between the cottage and us without the least fatigue. I heard him talking to Ferdy about a Ceylon saying—which is, 'That death always knocks three times at the door, before he leaves the earth, after his first summons.' Our father and mother have answered to two knocks. Who is to be the third? He wishes that it may be himself. My Linton! But he is stronger. Ferdy says he never saw him looking better; and grandpapa says his constant fainting fits arise more from physical causes than any disease. Children

born to their parents in the decline of age are rarely robust. Grandpapa is stronger than Linton. But I know, I feel—I am never to see my Linton die! The good merciful God sees into my heart, and will not shiver it into atoms, because it is so weak. No, no, strong in the faith of it, sustained by an inward trust, assured by a confident hope, I shall not see my Linton borne away from me, enclosed in his last home, with the mourners' feet busy about the room. I should be mad before then—Dead."

This is the last entry, in the last volume. I and my sisters knew that Death knocked for the third time at the door of Lovel-Leigh, and bore away our mother in the hour that I was born.

CHAPTER VIII.

“I hold it true, whate’er befall,
I feel it when I sorrow most;
‘Tis better to have loved and lost,
Than never to have loved at all.”

TENNYSON.

THERE is no record of the period subsequent to our mother’s death. We had never heard our father name her name, though it was mine also. If our nurse spoke to us of her, she did it in whispers, as if fearing our father might hear her from the nursery, down to his study, two stories distant.

Latterly, when my sisters left the nursery, and were given a maid to themselves with a suite of apartments, Nurse was in the habit of talking a great deal to me.

“Master was stunned, just like as if he was a statute. And if it hadn’t been for Mr. Seaton, we might have been a-mourning to this minute. He it was, Miss Rosie, as took you, and got you christened your mother’s name, because of ‘hereafter,’ he said; by which, my dear, he meant your poor papa, who could not live without a Rose, though, maybe, he could not abear hearing of another at the first, you know. But your great-grandfather was a most wonderful man as ever was. I think, Miss Rosie, he had lived to that age that he had the second sight. He was that oneeasy before my mistress’s confinement, we were quite unhappy for the old gentleman. He would be here to the latest minute at night, Miss Rosie; and would you believe it, my dear, let me be up ever so early in the morning, and there he would be awaiting for news, or, as maybe, satisfied to see all quiet in my mistress’s room, he would return to his breakfast, and

nobody would never know as he had been there but me. And my mistress so well, too, in such good spirits, thinking to have a boy,—but it was only you, Miss. She had a word or two with her grandfather about Mr. Home. He couldn't abide Mr. Home, handsome though he be, and with the merriest tongue; but indeed, I have no great faith in him neither myself: 'Out of sight, out of mind,' and them's the folks as is worth nothing. Well, Miss Rose, she wanted Mr. Home there, while she was upstairs, to amuse master; and her grandfather kept telling her, as he would do that, and he would watch over him; but she was set upon her own way. So he came, and they were all very lively, as they did always be, when he was in the house. And upon the next day, Mr. Home would have her in the boat, to row her. And, dear me, what a dark rage Mr. Seaton got into, when he saw her trusting herself to that harebrained fellow, for he is not as

wise as you, to this day, Miss Rose. And, indeed, master was full angry, saying as he handed her out of the boat, 'And you went without me, Rose ! '

"'Ferdy made me,' she answered so softly, with her eyes all pleading,—such eyes, just like Miss Pamela's. And then it appeared she was all dripping wet, and from what we could learn, he had for fun, as he said, got her in the boat, and when she wanted to wait for master, he had pushed off; she, struggling to get out, had fallen over, and was near slipping altogether into the water, if he had not held her. And seeing her pale and trembling, he had rowed her off into the lake, to let her recover, before master saw her. He was a coward, was he, and never thought of nothing but hisself. She didn't appear none the worse for a few days, though she never got her colour back. And then, Miss Rose, the end came, and I shall allers think it Mr. Home's fault as the most beautifullest

lady as ever could be seen, lost her life. And, indeed, haven't I reason, seeing as my little darling, my Miss Rosie, the pictur of her dear mamma, my heart's own treasure, is—is—?"

Here Nurse, as she always did when alluding to the misfortune with which it had pleased God to mark me, fell into one of her fits of weeping. After bewailing over me as usual, she proceeded:

"Well! your great-grandpapa was just everything, and he had you to his own house, out of the way. And he was just like father and mother to master; for Mr. Home, of course he went off. Not that any one ever evened to him as he was the cause, for no one never did, and my poor mistress near lost her life with your sisters. But it is not in his nature to be doing what he ought, and it's not in him to put himself out. And grief and sorrow and trouble were mortal things he hated; so he left, saying his feelings was too many for him, and it was a good time ere he

came back. Master was never a strong man—he had begun to fail before he married my mistress, through a nervous affection he had. So now, he grew quite the invalid; and as long as Mr. Seaton was there to do everythink for him, why, he moped about, and did nothink. But as the strongest back must break when its burden is too heavy for it, so old Mr. Seaton got all of a sudden quite broke, and it was clear it would soon be all over with him.

“Now after a few months was over, he had been mad upon master seeing you, little missy. But no, he couldn’t abear it, and Mr. Home was for ever a-telling him, ‘never to go too near the hateful child—its promised likeness would be too much for him.’ So you was a matter of two years old, my dear, or ever your papa saw you; and the likeness was a deal more plain than when you was littler. However, as I was saying, your great-grandpapa took

to his bed one day, and never left it after; and master came upstairs to see him; and it was most pitiable,—one might think as if everything had just happened all over again.

“After many words of grief from master, and advice from Mr. Seaton, who was wise as Solomon I be bound—for no man could be more knowledgable—it would seem, he said, ‘Little Rose is stricken of God.’

“‘How?’ said my master, shuddering as if a knife had been thrust into him.

“‘Most of us have five senses, she has but four.’

“‘God forbid!’ exclaimed my master, much as if he would have added, ‘Have I more to bear?’

“‘Take her to your heart, and be to her the missing sense. She is too young for us to judge for a certainty, but you will find my words true; Rose has stamped her likeness on the child to comfort you; love her last gift.’

“ So with that, my dear, your papa was up in the nursery in one moment, and I, hearing his step, was struck like a stone. You were here in your own nursery, my dear, for Mr. Seaton had lived with us a good bit about then ; and I saw your papa come in at the door, and all the colour fled out of his face like to a corpse. And you sitting in your little chair looks up,—and when you see your papa—the little ladies, your sisters, had often shown him to you in the garden, and his picture,—and so up you got, and ran with your little arms outstretched, and he stooped as you came, and caught you ; and I never see'd such a sight in my life. Well! so he kissed you until I thought you would be frightened, and he looked at you and gazed, and was in such a taking as I never saw. So I said,

“ ‘ She is pure healthy, sir, and has never ailed nothing since her birth.’

“ ‘ But, but,’ he exclaimed, gazing quite wild, and kissing you between every word,

‘her grandfather says he has a fear,— she sees, she hears me, she knows me; you know me, darling child’ (and you put up your little mouth to be kissed again as he said this); ‘what can it be? what is it, nurse, she lacks?’

“And so, my dear, I had to break to him what your great-grandpapa and I had long feared, though we had never said nothing to any one but each other. And I told him how you had never so much as cried since you were born, or laughed, or moaned, and that you were to be just like your mamma, but her voice, and God had so ordered it that we were never to hear that; but that you had pretty ways of your own, by which you made me understand well what you wanted, and were as quick and clever as a child twice your age. But I don’t think your father heard half I said, for you laid in his arms, and he regarded nothing else. And after that, my dear, I was no more use as nurse, but you

were always in your papa's arms; your little crib was by his bedside, and you and he learned to talk together in a way of your own that seems to do to the full as well as words. But Mr. Home never forgave me for giving your papa the 'shock,' as he said. And I says to him, every one has a business, and it is as well if each person would mind their own. And he answers that he wants 'no sauce,' and I replies, 'There's never no sauce without the dish 'tis wanted for,' which, Miss Rosie, was answer enough for him. I allers thinks, if a woman is the weaker vessel, sure where's the surprise?—wasn't she made from man, and he of nothing but the dust? It's unaccountable upon what they pride theyselves, to my thinking."

Unable to answer her, nurse took every advantage of this to chatter on. Though dumb, I was not deaf, but had all the advantages of an excellent listener.

"So your wise great-grandfather died,

my dear, after laying a month on his bed, and never losing his senses once. And it did master a power of good, having to nurse him and do for him, and think of something besides himself. And he prophesied a deal before he died, warning master of a many things ; but as he died, a smile came to his face, and he said, first laying his hand on the child's head as she knelt by his bedside, 'Mabel, be of good courage.' Miss Lovel was allers his pet, you see, my dear, for all he was so fond of you. It was but the day before he died, that he put round your necks those three pearl lockets. He had the pearls laid by for many years, and that's how he had them used, just the last year of his life. I see Miss Lovel is never wanting hers, but you and Miss Pamela let yours bide in their boxes as often as not. That's no fault of yours, you say ; well, maybe not ; they are no doubt heavy for such a little throat. Not so ! Well, my dear, have it

your own way. A pearl chain! Hoot, hoot, what wants such a little chit as you with a pearl chain? You love pretty things, ay, so do we all, and that's why you get your own way with every one."

CHAPTER IX.

“My friend! enough to sorrow you have given,
The purposes of wisdom ask no more:
Be wise and cheerful; and no longer read
The form of things with an unworthy eye.”

WORDSWORTH.

OUR father educated us himself—we understood that our great-grandfather had exacted this promise from him. We had a drawing-master and a dancing-mistress twice a week from Rudchester, the nearest town. Music he understood perfectly himself, but Pamela was the only one who cared much for it.

My sisters were twins, now nearly twenty years of age, but there was no family excitement about their resemblance to each

other. They were unlike even for sisters. Mabel was fair-haired, blue-eyed, and spirited. She was the eldest, at least so considered. Pamela was quiet, perhaps a little indolent, dark-haired, with eyes of a misty blackness, that gave them a look of peculiar softness. They were fringed with very long lashes, which seemed to spring out of a dark rim. They had both tall flexible figures, and pretty hands and feet. When Pamela was excited, and the colour rose in her face, and a brightness into her eyes, she was wonderfully pretty; but Mabel's face was beautiful, though of a serene gravity; if merriment came there it passed like a light cloud over the bosom of ocean. Her expression was too fine to be merry. Yet it was hopeful, and therefore always gladdening. One thing my sisters appeared to possess in common. Their voices were so alike it was impossible even for the sensitive ear of our father to distinguish one from the other, to which a slight lisp gave a

more marked peculiarity. I must try to recall my father, as he stood there gazing on the flowers, with their blooms nestling against the great oak staircase.

Tall, but very thin, bent as if by sorrow more than age, for he was but forty-five, if so much. White hair, fine, like silk, curling backwards, leaving bare, as if cut out of marble, a delicate profile, in which the only colour visible was pink in the transparent nostril, with the same hue a little fainter on the lips. Grey, clear eyes, that looked so pure, so cold, yet bright, they did not appear to be eyes, but rather gems, polished and rounded with exquisite art. He leant upon a stick, as if the weight of his fragile form required the support, and the long white delicate fingers nervously moved with convulsive twitches on the handle. His expression was habitually one of pain, unless excited by anything we said or did, and then he would stand erect. Life would illumine the cold eyes, a colour

rise and fall on the pale cheek, and he looked a gallant man, heroic through suffering, ennobled by learning.

It may be imagined that the family sin of exclusiveness or nervous shyness, flourished to its utmost limits in our childhood, and with reason. Our father, at all times a delicate, somewhat fanciful pedant, as he must be called, loved his books, and disliked society. And in his present circumstances there was every inducement to make him cling still more to the one, and nothing to allure him to seek the other. He seemed painfully conscious that when circumstances, as they necessarily did, called him into contact with others, it was as little to their liking as his own. Thus we had never left our home, which, matchless in its situation, beauty, and luxuries, provided us with every source of enjoyment. And it is probable, had we made the experiment of going out into the world, we should only have turned to our home the more

from the contrast. Yet we led Arcadian lives, rather than luxurious ones ; and if he did not choose to mix with his fellow-creatures, my father was munificent in his gifts to them. The more extensive his charity, if it was unacknowledged or unknown.

The only society we had may be described briefly. Miss Theen, as our great-grandfather had predicted, married Mr. Clifford, the agent of the estates — he was a morose, money-worshipping, narrow-minded man — and why she did so will be best explained in her own words :

“ You must not mind Clifford, my dear young ladies ; he will have his grumble, and after that he is better. Men have so much to worrit them, and he is always vexing because Mr. Lovel hasn’t an heir, a boy I mean, my dear ladies. He doesn’t know how to behave to ladies. He only married me for my money, you know, and I aggravated him by accepting him. I thought it for his good, my dear Miss Lovel ; he was poor and

humoursome, and I hoped to cure him of both ills by marrying him. Besides, I have John."

To have a John appeared to Mrs. Clifford the panacea for every woe under heaven. At all events, she never lost sight of the blessing, for she rarely uttered a sentence in which she did not contrive to bring in the word "John."

John was their only child.

We also were very fond of John, and our father loved him so much that he took great pains with his education, teaching him all he could, consistent with his health. Moreover, thinking it would be of advantage to him, and that he was sufficiently clever to profit by it, he would have sent him to college at his own expense.

But Mr. Clifford, who regarded everything in one and the same light, considered nothing but how soon he could turn John's talents into money, and sent him to be a clerk in his brother's warehouse in London.

His brother was a corn-merchant. Mrs. Forbes, our clergyman's wife, did not scruple to say that Mr. Clifford was afraid his son would be made a gentleman, and thus look above him, which he never would permit in his own son. But as nothing in art or nature could have made Mr. Clifford a gentleman, and as John was already one, by the refinement of his own disposition, it was the more provoking that he could not profit by my father's offer.

John was two years older than my sisters, and before he went to London, was the devoted slave of us all, but especially Mabel. It was sufficient for Miss Lovel to express a wish, and everything else was sacrificed to fulfil it. Sorely has poor John suffered at his father's hand for this devotion to us, which we learnt through the old man himself, as Mrs. Clifford or John would never have allowed it was any other than his greatest pleasure.

Mrs. Clifford, besides bringing her hus-

band a good sum of money, was an excellent manager, and invariably sweet tempered. She was one of those instances that one meets in the world, of strange marriages. She had everything to recommend her, and he had nothing, yet he was as stern and exacting, as if he had condescendingly raised her from a cottage to a throne. One could not exactly say the "throne of his affections," because he did not appear to possess any. She had informed us rather through implication than a statement, that our great-grandfather had warned her beforehand, she might do much better, and had insisted upon her money being strictly tied up, and at her own disposal.

"And that was an aggravation, too, to Clifford, not being able to do what he liked with my money. But at any rate, I should have married him, because I never heard of his having any one to love or care for him, and women are born to bear with

the ways of man, though John is quite an angel in his temper."

We never questioned Mrs. Clifford's entire right to have married or not, as she pleased; but these deprecatory little sentences were generally called forth by Mrs. Forbes, our clergyman's wife. She was not particularly amiable, nor did we care much for her: this arose, not so much from any great faults, but that she was so utterly inconsistent.

Having no children, and the parish being very small, she had not much scope for her energy, of which she possessed a great deal.

At times, she had a fit of visiting the poor, and was a never-failing petitioner to my father, for various things to be done to their cottages; or food and clothing to be distributed according to her demands. Popular as this gift ought to have been, she contrived to render it the reverse to the

objects of her bounty, by an arbitrary, flighty display of ill-judgment, that brought upon her much obloquy.

She would then leave her ungrateful parishioners entirely to themselves, and adopt a new device upon which to expend her energies. So that, in fact, she was always hobby-ridden, and yet her hobbies did her no lasting good, as, like dissolving views, they disappeared from her mind as effectually as if they had never been, while, during the prevalence of one, we were all stunned with the vehemence with which she adored her hobby, and wearied with the experiments that she poured out upon us.

This flightiness of character, or inconsistency, extended itself to the most indifferent things, and the greatest sufferers were her husband and servants. If she rode the hobby of economy, woe betide them if they wasted a pinch of salt: when

this fit left her, she fell into the opposite extreme, and wondered that they teased her, and broke in upon her valuable time to give out stores, and so would leave them open to all.

She would come to dine with us one day in her best attire, and in the same week, with the same kind of invitation, at the same hour, appear in her gardening dress.

There were two things in which she was tolerably consistent; the one was, depreciating Mrs. Clifford at every opportunity, and the other in always calling her husband poor—"Poor George," or "Poor Mr. Forbes." People that knew them did not scruple to say, "he was truly much to be pitied in having married her."

These were our only neighbours. The village near our home was very small, the largest house in it inhabited by Mr. Clifford. The church and parsonage were

nearly a mile away from it. Our doctor lived at Rudchester. But there were two people living in the great world, one of whom had been twice to see us, in our recollection, and the other, Ferdinand Home, came and went as it pleased him.

CHAPTER X.

“Between two worlds, life hovers like a star,
’Twixt night and morn, upon the horizon’s verge;
How little do we know that which we are !
How less, what we may be ! The eternal surge
Of time and tide rolls on, and bears afar
Our bubbles.”

BYRON.

FEDDINAND HOME still deserved the description given of him in our grandmother’s Diary—there was no fault to be found with his face or figure. Perhaps if anything they were more perfect, because more manly. Though but a few years younger than our father, he scarcely looked thirty, and had the manners of a boy still. He always heralded his entrance by a joyous laugh, and a warmth of greeting, that was infectious of itself.

He had not married, though he was always asserting that he was going to be,—generally to some one of high rank, whom he loved, or a lady with vast riches, who loved him. But time passed on, and neither came to pass.

Sometimes he would appear for a few days every month. At others, half a year might pass, and there would not be even a letter to speak to us of him. My father estimated it all as “Ferdy’s way.”

As children we enjoyed his coming; that is, my sisters did. But he regarded me with a dim perception that a God had smitten me—and the evidence of this was disagreeable. He was one of those who considered religion as rather useful than true—and of much more service, indeed requisite, for some than others. He felt no desire for a God, and would fain have lived without one; but I painfully brought to his mind that there must be one. So he disliked me. I, on my part, was no whit

behind him in that respect. I considered him vain, selfish, and weak. Girl-like, I founded my opinion from private observation. I noticed that Ferdy lost no opportunity of looking in the mirrors,—that he was always playing with or arranging his curls, pulling up his collar, or admiring his foot. I had no mercy for him, thus treading on our feminine prerogatives. I considered him selfish, because nothing would induce him to forego a wish that he had once taken into his head. Not my father's delicate health, my sisters' privileges as women, the wisdom or folly of what he wished to do, had any weight. He must be gratified at all hazards.

And as for his character, he had none at all: if called upon to give judgment on a case wherein his own feelings were not concerned, he agreed with any one, and considered all parties perfectly right—generally being in favour of the last

speaker. But like Jonathan and David, my father clung to him. He was a link of past days; he was mixed up with everything that had ever happened to him—custom had toned down the faults of Ferdy's character;—he had loved him when a conceited, hare-brained boy—he loved him still as a vain, thoughtless man. If he had become wise, grave, quiet, he would have missed his own Ferdy, and pined for the light laugh, the foolish jokes, and gossiping nonsense that never ceased flowing as long as Ferdy was near. Like the froth on the cup of champagne, his character effervesced and subsided according to the impulse of the moment.

He always gave himself credit for having a good heart, but upon what he founded this assumption I could not discover. He was generous to a fault, he would tell us, which was too true, for he was always borrowing money of my father, and then he lavishly squandered it.

He had a desire always to be loved, and he regarded you with only so much interest as you bestowed upon him. If you granted him the first place in your affections, he would reward you by giving you all he had to spare from himself.

It is difficult to say, if Ferdy had been well brought up and early disciplined, whether he would have been a good character. He never could have been a fine one ; and it is probable with over-much strictness he might have been insincere and false. As it was, he appeared to have been entirely spoilt and petted, and consequently his natural character had flourished with all the rank growth of a wayside weed. Of later years, Mabel and he had not been so friendly. She was exalted and large-hearted in all her conceptions. His were of the most insignificant character. So at times they disputed, though more often she cared not to answer him, from the certainty that he was incapable of understanding.

But Pamela—alas! our Pamela—she remained faithful to her first love, and the promise her childish lips had uttered, was about being confirmed by the vow of a woman's heart.

How am I to describe the peculiarities of her character, which out of its very purity and romance gave up her whole being from childhood into the keeping of another?

If our mother had slighted the ardent passion of the boy, he was to have his revenge in the devotion of her daughter. Likest to our mother in character, Pamela did all things with a subdued enthusiasm that of itself attested the depth of her feelings. She inherited from her grandmother faith and hope of the strongest character. Yet, unlike her, she did not sanctify them by the incense of religion, but placed her faith upon the groundwork of her own imagination, and buoyed up her hope with the images of her own enthusiastic nature.

Without being a poetess, she invested all things with the metaphors and drapery of poetry. Had she framed her thoughts into flowing lines of musical cadence, at least she must have felt the necessity of some practical basis. But no rule had our Pamela for anything but the promptings of her sensitive nature,—the thoughts of a heart as pure as it was tender.

And so it was given to Ferdy, long before his careless volatile affections perceived the gift. Unlike his usual habit, meeting any devotion to himself half-way, he was rather slow in taking in the perception of Pamela's love, so innocently conspicuous. This could not arise from the remembrance of her mother, and the boyish ardour of his sentiments for her. We knew his memory was but a broken cullender, through which everything slipt with marvellous facility, momentous or trivial. Yet some consistent motive delayed that final engagement of his heart and hand to Pamela, that appeared to us

spectators to be approaching nearer and more near.

Among the peculiarities of the Lovels, was one whose origin might be traced to their exclusiveness, and without doubt it was a weakness which they loved, and delighted in. They desired to be as little indebted to the rest of the world as was consistent with their keeping a high place in it.

It was therefore noted down more than once in the records, that where there was an only child, the dowry of his mother was returned to her own family. And in accordance with this precedent, the fortune of our grandmother was restored to the only connexions she had (and they were distant ones), the Deanes.

The memorandum of the deed is very short, and in my father's handwriting; but in the page recording it are folded one or two letters from the Deane family, expressive of their surprise and gratitude.

And we had also seen letters of a later date, wherein the writers continued to express themselves in warm terms of obligation, and to beg for congratulations upon sundry happy events in the family, consequent upon this unexpected accession of wealth.

There were two parts of the family, and my father accorded to each one half; but thoroughly to enjoy it, they amalgamated the whole, by Sir Richard Deane, heir of one part, marrying his cousin, the heiress of the other. This was the pretty Miss Deane, who our grandmother designed at one time should be my father's wife.

This Lady Deane was the person who had twice visited Lovel-Leigh in our recollection, the first time accompanied by Sir Richard.

They were the proposers of the visit themselves, moved thereto to enable them to express that gratitude in person they could so inadequately do by letter.

Four years passed before my father could make up his mind to receive them,

and after the visit was over, there was no desire on either side to renew it. Not even the weight of obligation on one side, and the old-fashioned high-bred courtesy of my father, could produce a congenial spirit between them. Though a worthy man in his way, and no doubt highly regarded by his own set, Sir Richard by nature was intended for a grazier ; he had no other conversation than farming ; he was sufficiently burly and powerful to alarm his own bull, and his voice had an incipient roar in it that very much reminded his hearers of his bucolic favourites.

Lady Deane was a true woman of the world, who owed her marriage at last to the happy stroke of fortune given her through my father's means. They were sadly in the way at Lovel-Leigh, and lamentably out of place. They had paid their debt of gratitude, and joyfully returned the one to his farm, and the other to her gaieties, with the weight of obligation lightened, if not altogether removed.

For, what with Mr. Lovel's nervousness, his peculiar habits, and the strange way in which he was bringing up his children, no doubt he was more or less insane. It was very fortunate that his insanity had taken such a happy turn in their favour. Thus they thought.

The second time that Lady Deane came to see us, she was in grief, though it assumed a very business-like form. The excellent Sir Richard had fallen from the wagon, as he was triumphantly bringing in his last load of hay himself, and never moved again; and she came to request my father's interference regarding her portion of his gift being assigned to her as dower. Of course, he could do nothing but tender his advice; and acting upon it, the trustees of her children made her a very handsome settlement and allowance. So for the second time she was greatly indebted to my father.

CHAPTER XI.

“ Give me leave
To enjoy myself: the place that does contain
My books, the best companions, is to me
A glorious court, where hourly I converse
With the old sages and philosophers.”

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

A FEW words more upon our peculiar education and Arcadian habits.

We had to rise early, and except on especial occasions of extreme cold or wet, we went out immediately, staying in the open air until eight o'clock, when we visited our father, carrying his breakfast of cocoa and toast, which he took in bed. While partaking of it, my sisters read aloud to him the psalms of the day. He listened with

his eyes shut, and it was my office to put into his hand the little sippets of toast that he ate, as if it was a labour to him. This done, we gave him each our opinion of the weather, what flowers were out, if we had seen anything new, if we had noticed anything peculiar in earth, air or sky. If we had, he smiled, pleased. Our powers of observation never lacked service, so anxious were we to please him. Mabel's account would be simple, attractive from its concise accuracy. Pamela's was profuse, tinted with the imagery of an eastern fable.

Mine would be on this fashion.

“ And the child ? ” my father would ask ; “ a storm passed over ? Storms and their characteristics have not altered since the world began. No, child, they have not ; yet no two storms can be described in the same language. Yes ! what we read yesterday in the first *Aeneid* describes this morning's sky. Does it ? Yet Virgil imitated Homer in most things. We will look at

Homer to-day, and read what he says of storms and clouds. No! too full of battles to please you. Then we will try Spenser. When did Homer live? In the next century to Solomon, I believe; Good! Let us begin with Solomon, and trace up the description of storms to the present time, the last winter, yourself. You can prepare your description while I am dressing."

After such remarks as these, we left my father, and breakfasted; then we proceeded to study any subject we chose, until he appeared, dressed. He liked us to write out an epitome of what we read every day, and was particular in making us use Saxon words at one time, at another those derived from Latin, Greek, or coined words, that we might note the difference.

At one o'clock china baskets of fruit would be brought in, also cakes, bread, and confectionary, with caraffes of water and milk.

After luncheon we had music and draw-

ing for an hour, when we dispersed to spend another hour in any fashion we liked. It was then that I learnt my lessons, and at this hour that my sisters had laden themselves with roses.

If my father was sufficiently well, we rode from four to six o'clock with him. But if suffering, one of us drove him in a little low carriage, or he lay on a sofa drawn to the casement, and he watched us amusing ourselves on the lake, or gardening.

At six we dined, a meal over which my father lingered, as if to prolong the time ere night should come, nights that were to him, like the nights of Job, full of suffering.

From this time until we left him, it was our pleasure to amuse our father. Pamela sang and played, Mabel read aloud, and I waged war at chess with him. Our efforts tended to give him some pleasant thing to reflect on during the weary hours of pain and watchfulness.

It was at this time that we indulged in all sorts of light reading, dipping deeply into the tales of the Arabian Nights, the romances of Walter Scott, the fairy tales of every land, with all things ghostly and mythological, which was a study we loved.

It must not be inferred that we were proficient in Latin and Greek. Our knowledge of the old authors was taken from translations, though we had necessarily become familiar with the sound of both languages, so as to attach some meaning to them, because my father generally read the original aloud for his own gratification.

To know that poetry was the mother of all literature, astonished us greatly. "Yes," said my father, "for, without exemplifying the Scriptures, there was a sort of rude poetry in the time of Romulus, composed as songs of triumph. From these arose tragedies and jesting plays, composed in dialogues, that were recited at their feasts, or during harvest or vintage time;" and so

on, we traced literature up to the present time.

This sort of life, with the mode of study, had the effect of making us forget we were in a busy working world. We were imbued with the spirit that all things pass on unceasingly, we were only here for a time, and our abiding place was far beyond, into which we were not yet fitted to enter.

Our hold on the earth seemed small, regarding it through the affections, and our promise of the next world large, because of the fulfilment of all things great, certain, and everlasting within it.

So we were dreamy, theoretical girls, with quick fancies—on Mabel's part great discernment or intelligence.

Of the county families we knew very little. They had for some time kept up a sort of semblance of intercourse with our father ; but as he never returned their visits or accepted their invitations, he was generally left to himself ; the good-natured pity-

ing him, and the evil-disposed angry with him. We remembered one or two visits being paid by some who forewent their indignation to gratify their curiosity ; but they left no other impression on us, than a shifting scene in a play, or the remembrance of a dream.

So time passed on, honoured or dis-honoured by the possessors of it ; and my sisters were now past twenty, without having had more intercourse with the world than when they were children.

My father was particular in one thing—he would have us fashionably dressed. If we were deficient in actual knowledge of the world, at least we should not expose our ignorance by home-bred or obsolete habits.

And that no mistake should occur, twice a year Mrs. Watson, a fashionable London milliner, came down from London, with an assistant, and a goodly assortment of the prevailing modes of the day. The carriage

was always sent to meet her at Rudchester, with a luggage-cart for her boxes, a piece of extravagance that upset Mrs. Clifford's temper for a week—or rather, made that which was bad much worse. Not even the knowledge that Mrs. Clifford would be sure to benefit by Mrs. Watson's visit (for my father had so much of humanity in him, that he entered fully into the feminine weakness for dress, and sent for all far and near to look at the fashions), overcame the fact, that to bring Mrs. Watson and take her back, cost six and sixpence for turnpikes alone.

Mrs. Watson generally remained from two days to a week, according to the time she had to spare. She had her own rooms, with servants to wait upon her, and was treated with much ceremony and courtesy by my father.

She would spread out all her wares, and he would come and examine everything minutely, taking infinite pains to assure

himself of the fitness and propriety of the things she advised us to have; but not deciding until we gave our opinion, of which, mine was invariably praised by Mrs. Watson. As much love as could be spared from her vocation (in which she delighted with every feeling she possessed), was bestowed upon me, arising in part from my misfortune, but more from the artistic manner in which I dressed my doll. She pitied me, as much from my muteness, as because—had Providence permitted—I could have made my fortune as a milliner, and it distressed her to see such talent thrown away. Pity, we know, is akin to love, and as she always declared, if she loved anything it was me—from the first moment when my childish beauty had pleased her, and my misfortune had smitten her with grievous astonishment.

Henceforward, we were the best of friends, and established such excellent signs between us, that she was as quick at

understanding my meaning as those about me.

It was my father's custom to make presents to the servants, and even to some of the visitors, who came to see the fashions.

Among these Mrs. Clifford and Mrs. Forbes were never forgotten.

It used to amuse me to watch them making their choice.

Mrs. Clifford would murmur something about "too generous—if John was here, a piece of silk for a waistcoat for John—"

"John, indeed! A poor compliment to Mr. Lovel, I am sure, Mrs. Clifford, to select nothing better than that."

"But everything is so expensive, and so much too gay for me, Mrs. Forbes!"

"Not at all—I think I shall choose this mantle: what is the price, Mrs. Watson?"

"Seven guineas, ma'am."

"Seven guineas—the woman's mad. Do you imagine for one moment that I

should be so wicked as to put seven guineas on my back?"

"It is real lace, ma'am."

"Real lace! ah! that makes a difference. Poor George cannot bear me to wear anything that is not real. But, after all, I don't want a mantle; I think a cloak more suitable for me."

"That is eleven guineas, ma'am."

"Good heavens!—well, I must be content with this dress—after all, I believe I want a dress more than anything. To be sure I do, and so do you, Mrs. Clifford; so take my advice, and choose as I am going to do—a dress."

We were very certain, before the things were packed up, that Mrs. Forbes would go away with the cloak that cost eleven guineas, and that Mrs. Clifford, expostulating, would reluctantly carry home a silk dress, instead of the little French scarf she had modestly selected.

CHAPTER XII.

“Let our unceasing, earnest prayer
Be, God ! for light, for strength to bear
Our portion of the weight of care,
That crushes into dumb despair
One half the human race.” LONGFELLOW.

So once more we stand by the oaken staircase. Our father has ridden too far, or the perfume of the flowers is too much for him, for as he uttered the words, “Merit should be rewarded on the instant,” he fainted, and Mabel caught him.

The proper remedies for these sudden fainting fits were always at hand in every room, and in administering them we had more experience than we liked. He was unable to dine with us ; and, though after-

wards we spent the rest of the evening with him in the usual manner, there was a whispering fear knocking at each heart as we noticed the pale face, paler than ever, and the thin hands too weak to sustain their own weight.

The evening was sultry, yet every now and then there was a stir amid the summer leaves, as if some wind floated by, sighing sadly as it passed. And the shadows of the night were very dark, and a silence had fallen on the earth that seemed to fore-shadow a great solemn change. No insects were about, idle, light-dazzled moths foolishly fluttering to suicide; no long legged, clumsy crane-fly; no booming, blundering cockchafer. The owl was not out to-night, neither were the little stars, twinkling down little, tender glances of love. It was a solemn night, which I longed to shut out, loving sunshine and all gay things.

Mabel was reading aloud; I knew her

heart, too, was heavy, for her voice was low and subdued.

“Pharonezzar did you say, Mabel?” asked my father, rousing himself.

“Yes, father; the Assyrian Pindar.”

“Ah, he who wrote his verses on bridges and walls for want of other means. Mark, children, how subtle is the brain of man. He can find a substitute for everything, a remedy for misfortune, a cure for pain, a redress for grievances, and a Nepenthe for woe, let it cut to the very heart.” A silence followed this sentence of my father’s, which was of a kind unusual to him. We had no answer ready, none to give. “But there is no substitute for death.”

Mabel shut her book abruptly, and Pamela flew to my father. He smiled at her wondering, alarmed face.

“A long life is not so happy as one that is well spent, my children. I have very little business left me to do now, but to die. And you must help me to prepare for

it, that I may attest my life by my death. Be comforted, children. I am going home."

"Father, you leave us behind."

"True, but do not be faint-hearted. Rather rejoice that one much stricken of God, through the heart as well as body, sees at last the gracious Hand of Mercy stretched out to him, saying, 'It is enough.' You have kept me thus long here by your love, your care, your pretty, fond ways. Mabel, you are scared."

The word was arrested on his lips by a vivid flash of lightning, followed by a reverberating roll of thunder, that appeared to shake the house to its foundation.

We drew close to our father, not so much from fear as awe. The solemnity of a death-warning appeared to be sent to us from heaven. The mighty voice of God told us there could be no appeal from the infallible Word.

All four silent, absorbed, each for the other; the storm raged on, and was heard

now shrieking in the distance, or rushing back in great gusts of bellowing wind and stormy rain, until, at the end of an hour, nothing remained of it but heavy moans, as if the exhausted atmosphere was sobbing itself to rest, as a passion-worn child.

“God be with you, my children; good night.”

He desired that we should go humble and teachable to the Father in heaven, who was about to take our earthly father to himself; and dismissed us, while yet influenced by the might of the thunder-storm. It was a grief to dwell upon alone; we dared not speak to each other of it yet. Still it was not new to us.

My sisters, deeply smitten at heart, yet for the sake of the little mute girl, still so young, so childish, hiding it, took me up to nurse, and gave her many charges not to lose sight of me until I slept. For perhaps I might have been frightened by the thunder-storm.

“Very true, my dears, very true. We all can scream, and so relieve ourselves, which indeed I did, and Anne here can testify I was mortal skeered. She’s all on the tremble, poor little darling. Don’t be feared, Miss Rosie, it is all gone by now. Not frightened ! Oh, never tell me such fibs, with your own face as white as a sheet.”

“No, not frightened,” murmured Mabel between her kisses, “but heart-wounded. Our father’s darling is ours also. Next to him, the thing we most love.”

Whispering such words of sympathy, shortly they left me; and though too excited to sleep, I lay down and shut my eyes, that nurse might be deceived out of her promised watch.

And then my mind became filled with lingering thoughts of the past and solemn apprehensions for the future. Mixed with these arose strange bewildering ideas of the use of this world, the estimate of the value of life, the termless bounds of eternity, that

frightened me, as I thought to trace the end of it. Ever, ever to be! In my young dismayed heart, touched for the first time with dread, I felt no desire to pray for anything but annihilation. A shadow, a phantom, a nothing, so that I might be relieved of the weight of being, and all its woes, and its ponderous duties. How was I to learn resignation? Who was to teach me endurance? A glimmer, dim and shadowy, of the same power of far-seeing, inherited from my great-grand-father, seemed to take possession of me. I opened my eyes suddenly, that I might see no farther into that I dreaded. And lo, the moon was shining high, filling the room with liquid silvery light. I rose softly, not to disturb nurse, and looked out. I could see the hills in the distance, round and swelling, the spire of the church shining clear out of the pine wood, the steeple rimmed by the moon with burnished silver, then a low line of deep shadow, down to the lake, whose still waters qui-

vered as with love for the moonbeams, that sent their long gleams straight to their embrace.

Stretching out my arms, as if to catch the soft tender beams, I sat there thinking. It was light enough to see the rain-drops still shining on every leaflet, and little gossamer threads were being woven by invisible weavers, on which the moon and the rain together cast a light that made them look like chains of opals.

And the moonbeams slowly drifted near me, until I was enclosed in the soft light. Then I looked up the luminous pathway, and it appeared to me that an earnest prayer of faith might open mine eyes to see steps, up which the innocent, the wronged, the weary might ascend, angel-led, and so be gathered into glory. With child-like trust, I thought to essay the prayer. Words were not needed for Him to whom I was about to petition,—when from beneath, as out of the earth, came a voice:

“ Rose ! Rose !”

My heart stopped beating. Was it some one from the dead calling me, for that voice had never uttered my name before ?

Then there floated up a sigh, full, profound, and voluminous with woe and disappointment.

I ran hastily to Mabel ; she, too, was moon-gazing, and making the sign by which I expressed my father, we both went downstairs with swift feet to his chamber, which was on the ground-floor.

It was entered first by an ante-chamber, wherein were collected all the treasures of his youth. On the walls hung the pictures of his favourite horses and dogs. On brackets were the stuffed birds and animals that he had collected, rare or curious. The room was entirely paneled with oak, and the floor matted. Over this our feet passed noiseless, and we reached the open door of our father’s chamber. Then for the first time, we realized the burden of this life to

him, and from Mabel's heart and mine there passed the wistful craving to keep him with us.

“What God's blessings you are, children!” murmured my father, as soon as he could speak, after the remedies we applied. “I wished for you, and lo, you are here!”

Perhaps at last, he had consecrated me with my mother's name.

“Read to me, Mabel—the sound of your voice may soothe me into sleep.”

As she read the words:—

“Using the Vale of Misery as a well, full of pools of water,” he repeated it after her.

“You will encounter these pools of water, Mabel.”

“True, father, but they may be full of fair and refreshing water—‘adding strength upon strength.’”

“Amen,” he uttered, and shortly slept.

Then Mabel placed my head on her

lap, and leaning hers against my father's pillow, we too rested. The day was dawning when she roused me, our father still in a deep sleep. Noiselessly we crept upstairs, agreeing to wake Pamela and go out.

She lay hot and restless on her little bed, her eyes swollen, heavy with the unshed tears of grief in dreams.

As I waited for my sisters on the terrace, I noted the footmarks of the storm of the night before. The day looked sullen, and a large ominous cloud rose up side by side with the sun. I entitled it our grief rising to mar our fairest day, when lo! there appeared another shouldering and overshadowing the first one. Still forecasting the future, I marked with bewildered fascination a phalanx of dusky clouds, that rose one after another in a solemn majesty, like ghostly things, gradually filling all the heavens, and then, folding themselves one over the other in a thick misty veil, they

so obscured the sun, rising in splendour,
just as if he had never been.

Did the Almighty design that I should
use this omen as a warning ?

CHAPTER XIII.

“That we would do,
We should do, when we would, for this ‘would’ changes
And hath abatements, and delays as many
As there are tongues, are hands, are accidents,
And then this ‘should’ is like a spendthrift’s sigh—
That hurts by easing.”

SHAKSPEARE.

THE first occurred at once. From this day our father became a confirmed invalid, and to Mabel was entrusted the rule of our little kingdom.

“Who knows where Ferdy is?” asked my father that afternoon, as we laid him on cushions in the garden.

“He is at Ryde, father,” answered Mabel for Pamela, who had received the last letter from him, and was nervously

blushing, in the endeavour to make the acknowledgment.

So strange is love. Ashamed of that it most dotes on—abashed at pronouncing the word 'tis ever whispering to the heart.

“Write to him, Pamela, and bid him come here; I want him on business, little as he loves it. But it is for the first time, so he will not disregard the summons.”

Nor did he.

He arrived at the end of three days; and it would appear as if he also had experienced a shadow in the gay career of his life.

If he laughed, 'twas with constraint; if he gazed at his boots or himself in the mirror, it was clearly more from habit than admiration.

Mabel, I saw, liked him in this new mood; it accorded with our present feelings. Moreover, he was sedater, less boyish, and he brought with him a certain air of

comfort, that one whom my father loved so much should be here to amuse him.

The day after his arrival, my father sent for him to talk to him, ere he rose for the day. I was waiting on him, and in obedience to his wish sat on the bed by him, combing his long white hair.

“I sent for you, Ferdy, because I have had a warning that this weary frame will not last much longer.”

“No, no, Linton—I declare that is impossible—I never saw you look better.”

This was one of the things I disliked in Ferdy, he never told the truth. I had heard him, the evening before, tell Pamela, my father was so aged, and looked so ill, he should scarcely have known him.

My father waved his hand, as much as to say, “Have your own opinion, I have mine;” but aloud he continued—

“I wish to make my will, and settle my affairs—in fact, put my house in order, so

that I may have nothing left to do but to prepare to die."

A strange anxiety came into Ferdy's eyes, and he coloured deeply, while forgetting his usual habit of ignoring everything serious and laughing it off, he answered—

"Of course you make Mabel an eldest son?"

"I do no such thing. If I did so, Mabel is of that disposition she would enrich her sisters, to the detriment of herself. They shall share and share alike, as co-heiresses."

"But,—but,—should they marry—"

"I hope they will do so—"

"But how divide the estate?"

"No need to divide it at all. The rents are to be collected as usual—the sum divided into three parts, and a part given to each sister. From that they themselves will apportion what they choose, to keep their property in repair. Or stay, it would

be more to my mind to make that unalterable."

"And the house?"

"They may live in it, or let it, or burn it, or do what they like with it."

"And, and—may I ask, that is, can you at all guess, what each portion will be?"

"My dear Ferdy, I must be a very poor man of business, and most unworthy to have succeeded to this fine estate, if I did not know its exact value. The rent-roll is under 4000*l.* a year."

"What an heiress Mabel would be, or Pamela!—for no one knows which is the eldest."

"That is of very little moment, as I design to have three heiresses instead of one. But out of this rental, you must deduct the expenses of the estate, and income-tax. I think my daughters will have, each of them, a clear 1200*l.* a year, which is more than sufficient for any woman. In addition, there is 10,000*l.*"—

Here from my father's heart came welling up great sighs.

Ferdy rose hastily, put his handkerchief to his eyes, blew his nose, and acted (for, was it real?) all the signs of great grief.

After awhile, my father said—

“I have never touched that, it will be equally divided. But, my Ferdy, listen to me. I have been so long out of the world, I know so little, that I want you to recommend to me a good lawyer. In this will that I am about to make, I wish to guard against any mischances occurring to girls so inexperienced. Now—at this moment, I begin to fear that in keeping them wholly to myself”—

“They may command me—all that I can do, you know, Linton, I will.”

“I question, Ferdy, if you are a better man of business than the child here. They are not ignorant, and have common sense; but the ways of the world are sometimes antagonistic to these virtues.

So I take your offer, Ferdy, to be a brother to them, as you know the habits and customs of the world so much better than we do."

"Brother," murmured Ferdy, jumping up again, and pulling out his handkerchief, "a brother!"

He strode once or twice up and down the room. He ran his fingers through his hair, he pulled up his shirt collar, I saw him look round for a mirror, and in default of one, admire his boots. Ferdy had made up his mind for some mighty deed, and was preparing himself for it. "When you return to town, seek among your friends for a good honest lawyer, no need to ask if he has brains, as I suppose he would be no lawyer without them. Of course a gentleman, for I must have him down here. You can give him some idea of my intentions, so that he can bring with him the draught of a will for my approbation. You will do this, Ferdy?"

“ Yes, I will. 1200*l.* a year, as you say, Linton, is quite sufficient for a woman.”

“ I might have saved, indeed I have saved a little; we live so quietly, that, almost without intending it, I have a few thousand pounds laid by. These I intend for my Ferdy, if he will accept them.”

Ferdy was profuse in his thanks, and longing to know the probable amount, which he did not learn. I can imagine my father hardly knew himself what he had laid by.

“ I have preferred putting the estate in the most exact order, so that the rental shall come in as clear as possible. But in case my daughters marry, I shall so tie up their shares that they can neither be fore stalled nor mortgaged.”

“ How are they to marry? They see no one.”

“ They are young yet, and if the world is what I remember it, heiresses never lack offers.”

“ Ah, yes, very true, the moment they

appear, of course they will have all sorts of people fluttering about them; I must be very careful of them." And again some big thought made a commotion in Ferdy's brain.

"Child, you can tell your sisters of this conversation. No! Why?"

"Mabel is so wise, let her be the sole heiress, and if Pamela marries, Mabel will give the husband what he deserves."

My father repeated this aloud as he read it off my fingers. And I watched Ferdy's face.

At first he was astonished, then he looked foolish, and ended by being angry.

But as he could not resent it upon me in the shape of open reproof, he did it covertly.

"That poor child! what will become of her, so cruelly deficient?"

My father stroked my cheek.

"God will provide," he answered.

Am I bitter upon Ferdy? It seems so.

Yet I record but the bare facts that happened. Let the future speak for me, and plead my provocation. That evening was realised the rising of the second black cloud. Ferdy came in from the garden, all flushed and excited, claiming Mabel and me as sisters. Pamela followed, blushing, speechless, but lovely in her new-born happiness as she sunk beside my father's chair.

It was some time ere he understood what had occurred, and then, by the nervous twitching of his hands we saw the surprise was greater than the pleasure.

Only when he saw Pamela's face did a soft smile illumine his.

He read a tale there that reminded him of a vision of Paradise, the fruits of which he had tasted with his mortal lips, and had never forgotten it. Or perhaps, in Pamela's eyes, he saw a spirit that had once glowed with like love for him. The look, the likeness, the remembrance, came to his spirit like a soothing south wind.

His soul melted with the recollection, and the silent burden of his long pent-up-sorrow passed away.

“ You remind me of your mother,” he said, and smiled.

“ Mother! ” that soft, sweet word, which he had never before uttered to us. She seemed near to us that night, hovering close by in spirit. We were silent with a species of solemn joy.

Ferdy was very good. He certainly had a little the appearance of a person who had, at last, taken a fatal plunge. He was evidently surprised at himself, and something fearful as regarded his individual worship of himself having now to be divided.

But Pamela’s beautiful happiness was gladness to see, and that he was the cause of it, gave him infinite ground for self-approbation.

As for our father, after the first surprise he became soon reconciled, then pleased.

Finally it appeared to give him a glow of excitement, that brought even health and strength with it; so beneficial is joy!

When we bid him good night, he kissed me between the eyes, and said, "God love my little Rose!"

CHAPTER XIV.

“An idler is a watch that wants both hands,
As useless when it goes, as when it stands.”

COWPER.

How often it occurs in this world of inconsistencies, that what we heard at first with doubtful misgivings, perhaps painful surprise, ends at last in being of all others the good most auspicious !

The prospect of a wedding, especially when unexpected, almost improbable, casts a halo over the home in which it occurs. There may be, and must be, a few painful feelings, — the inevitable change, — the probable parting, — the doubtful future, whether for happiness or not. But in our household there would be little change,

and no parting, and the future ought to have rolled itself out clear before us. For he who was to be permanently ours, had been almost so for years. We had nothing new to learn of him—it might be conjectured. Still so much torn off from the usual mixture of evil with the good—of a wedding, ours was not wholly popular.

Mr. Clifford was entirely against it—Mr. Home had borrowed money too often, and in too large sums, of Mr. Lovel, to have much himself. Miss Pamela would probably have to keep him, instead of his keeping her. And this sin, glaringly committed by himself, was of a monstrous and overwhelming character, unforgivable when perpetrated by another. Mrs. Clifford had never been quite proof against Mr. Home's beauty, and his winning popular manner. Nevertheless, remembering antecedents, which no one else appeared to do, the announcement was a shock at first. "She wished John was not

gone to the Baltic to buy corn for his uncle, she would like to have had his opinion."

Mrs. Forbes thought it "Excellent, admirable, she hoped the marriage would take place immediately ; our father looked ill—accidents might happen. If we had settled to have Mrs. Watson down, she would like to know, as she had a few commissions for her. She must think of a dress—"

How is it that some people, being called upon to assist at a wedding, a fête, a picnic, an archæological meeting, the opening of a church, or a funeral, invariably consider the first thing, "What shall I wear ?"

Mrs. Forbes was one of these people ; and her thoughts were so nimble, she would not only dress herself, but the whole company, at either of these ceremonies.

Mr. Forbes was about to give his opinion of the wedding, when his wife stopped him.

“My poor dear George, what do you know of weddings? You are an excellent clergyman, admirable, content yourself with that, and leave such foolish and insignificant things as weddings to me.”

When divested of his gown and surplice, Mr. Forbes was entirely unfurnished with character. Even when free from his wife's presence, he was so much out of the habit of giving an opinion, that he appeared at last to waive the trouble of thinking. With so energetic a wife, it was indeed wiser to abandon the power—for to pronounce a conviction was her stimulus to an instant upsetting of it.

Of our own household, it had not been the habit of the family to unbend by even the mutual claim of long seniority and servitude, to our domestics.

Nurse alone had the privilege of giving us her opinion, and if it was that of the household generally, popular as a wedding

might be, this one did not give them satisfaction.

It is not among our equals, or those with whom we familiarly live, that the record of our character can be tested.

Unguarded moments will occur, and in them it is seen if the polish of the surface extends to the mind, if the refinements and elegancies of our station belong equally to our natures,—in short, if “the gentleman” in externals is “the gentleman” at heart.

In our household, I think I can remember, Mr. Home was neither respected nor liked.

But none of these judgments upon the marriage affected that of our father.

He rose up, on the morning after its announcement, with an animation and excitement to which he had long been a stranger—a pressure seemed removed from his heart, from which it rose elastic.

We understood the feeling, he would not now leave us friendless,—we had a legiti-

mate protector, whose own welfare and good fortune must necessarily be bound up with ours,—one whom he knew—whom he loved. And if in some things he was weak, perhaps foolish, we had been carefully educated. Young as she was, Mabel displayed a courage, a determination, and sound judgment that would not disgrace the stronger sex. On these qualities he relied, for any failing there might be in the character of Ferdy. Moreover, in that high chivalric feeling so strongly possessed by our father, it pleased him to think that, however boyish might have been the feeling, Ferdinand having lost what Linton gained, the daughter should redeem the score.

So our orderly household was upset, as it is presumed most houses are when a wedding is in prospect. No more studies—at least not the study of books. But Pamela is ever more and more striving to know the secrets of a human heart, that

she may the more mould her own thoughts to his; having gifted him with her love, she would now yield him every fibre of her being.

Mabel was studying to submit to that which, unpalatable perhaps at any time, was at present without a redeeming point.

Though we spoke not of it, I knew, and she had the perception, that if Pamela had not been a co-heiress, Ferdy would not have proposed to her. And in the agony of the supposition that the exquisite love and tenderness of a most spotless heart was given unworthily—who was to tell her? In what scorching words, in whose untuneful voice, was such a thing to be uttered? And we had a supposition, wild perhaps, but dreadful in the persistence with which it rose ever and ever above all other conjectures, if Mabel had been the sole heiress, it would have been Mabel he would have selected.

The love, passed so lightly from mother

to daughter, would have shifted like a stray leaf from one sister to the other.

Our best hope lay in the fact that Ferdinand was peculiarly sensitive in all that concerned himself, and was not likely, the more he knew of the depth of Pamela's feelings, to be slow in responding. The more she loved him, and showed her love, so much the more would his increase and grow. Feed his vanity, and he was to be turned, like the down on a thistle-stalk, with little puffs of wind. Pamela had woman's peculiar gift—endurance. For those she loved she would have suffered martyrdom without a pang.

And so Mabel went about her duties with a resolute spirit—cold eyes, the lids swollen with the tears she would not shed, and (for a heart so young and hopeful) a tranquil, subdued air: these alone told a tale to those who chose to read it.

And to indifferent eyes, it appeared no more than the reluctance natural in a twin

sister, to love that first place in a heart that had been so long as her own.

Our father urged Ferdy to go to London at once, and bring down the lawyer with him. "He may as well prepare your settlements, too, Ferdy. Let me see you happy at all events, and settled here, before I die."

"Pray don't, Linton ! you harrow up my feelings talking thus. Yes, I will go—but how am I to tear myself away from my darling girl ? Let us wait a week."

"A week ! Ah, Ferdy, when a man's life has arrived so near its end, that it may be counted by weeks, do not talk so lightly of the time—but obey me. Besides, you have your own people to consult ;—I never heard much of your relations."

"Oh, by-the-bye, I don't think I have any."

"Not your aunt Woodville ?"

"Yes, she is still alive ; but we are not very friendly at present."

“Another quarrel! How often do you fall out?”

“Constantly, my dear Linton. She has the most awful temper, and is exacting. I really don’t care if I never see her again.”

“But are you not her heir?”

“Oh yes, of course.”

“By law, or her will?”

“I suppose by law—I never asked. It will be monstrous shabby of her if she does not leave everything to me.”

“In either case, I think, Ferdy, she must be written to. You will have to tell me, my good fellow, what income you possess. You and I, Ferdy, have only played together like schoolboys; business never intruded on our pastime.”

“And why should it now, Linton? Let us leave everything to the lawyers.”

“I agree to this, provided he comes immediately. I am well to-day, but how can I answer for to-morrow? One attack will prostrate me for weeks, and perhaps render me unfit for business.”

“Then I will write. I know of a capital fellow—first-rate! indeed, he is a little related—he is, in fact, a connexion of mine;—you would not like that—”

“Why not? If he is interested for you in his advice, Ferdy, do you think I could find it in my heart to blame him? No, no! I think I am pleased that he is connected with you.”

(Dear father, what a fine heart you had!)

“You prefer writing?”

“Yes, oh yes! How can I leave my dearest girl?”

My father smiled. Even he saw through Ferdy’s little absurdities. He had often left before, in the most unconcerned fashion.

“I suppose I must let you go; you have given me enough of your valuable time.”

Ferdy was darting off (to my mind—more to escape further business questions)—

“Stay, Ferdy; tell Mabel to have fires lit in the cedar rooms.”

CHAPTER XV.

“First love will with the heart remain
When its hopes are long gone by;
As frail rose blossoms will retain
Their fragrance when they die.”

JOHN CLARKE.

THESE rooms had been our mother's. Though constantly aired and cared for, they had never been used since her death. I question if my father had ever been in them since that time. Mabel, when she saw my father's varying colour, and the nerves vibrating until he scarce had power to control his limbs, would fain have dissuaded him from the trial.

“I shall [never be stronger, Mabel. I never hope to feel again so much life in me

as I do to-day. There is no link lost in our family records since first they lived at Lovel-Leigh, until the chain was suddenly snapped, sixteen years ago. I wish to give you what was your mother's, and to connect the broken link, so that you may fill up the blank."

So he walked in, leaning on Mabel's shoulder ; Pamela, Ferdy, and I behind.

As my father looked round the room, which was a boudoir, a sudden chill at his heart made him faint and white. Mabel guided him to a couch, and, from habit, I snatched up a scent-bottle on the table, and flung the perfume of what was within around ; kneeling before him to bathe his hands with it. As the peculiar fragrance pervaded his senses, he opened his eyes with a start.

" Rose," he said, whispering, almost unconscious, " have you come for me ? I am ready," and he bent towards me ; his heart beating so as to be almost audible.

Oh, for speech ! just for one moment, to undeceive him. Mabel saw my agony, not having heard his words.

“Father, it is the child. She brings you our mother’s perfume, from the bottle that has so long rested unopened on her table.”

The soft words fell distinctly on his ear. He was recovering himself, and while he did so we turned from him and looked round the room. The walls were papered with an Indian paper, resplendent with fruit, birds and flowers of gayest hues. Round the room was a cornice of carved cedar wood. Brackets rested upon this, that upheld China ornaments and statuettes,—with here and there a small bookcase with graduated shelves ; little groups of figures with fruit forming their apex.

Against the walls hung five pictures, in deeply-moulded ebony frames. Four were portraits—our grandparents and parents. The fifth was a curious old Dutch picture,

painted on copper, and representing the interior of a Dutch hostelry.

On the broad deep window-sill were five china pots, representing basket work. Within them was some mould sixteen years old, and some faded stalks of flowers, sixteen years dead.

On either side of the doorway, into an inner room, which had been my mother's bedroom, were two cabinets. One was of cedar, inlaid with ivory; the other tortoise-shell, intermingled with mother-of-pearl. On the cedar cabinet there were little rows of turquoise. On the darker one, every knob or handle for the drawers was a garnet. They were our mother's own; given her by her grandfather, and brought from Ceylon. We were now about to see them opened for the first time.

By the couch on which my father rested was a little cedar table—on it a work-basket, through which we could see working materials, with the lace and cambric of

a little unfinished baby's cap. The middle of the room was occupied by an Indian table, composed of very many different sorts of wood, radiating from the centre, in the curve of feathers. On this were all the books and little things my mother had used daily. The curtains were of Indian silk, deeply fringed, and of a pale gold colour, embroidered in blue.

As I looked out of the window, the landscape rose before me like a picture, and the remembrance of it has remained there, as if engraved with the pencil of a *Mnemosyne*.

Low round hills, purpled with heather, rose distinctly against a faint blue sky, on which floated in downy languor a few light clouds. The purple of the hills shone royally against the horizon; lower down it intermixed itself with the hues of earth, and was lost in a furzy copse, out of which sprung, richly dark, a wood of Scotch firs. Their tawny stems rose here and there in vigorous power, exposing the tempest-tossed

branches in strong contrast to the peaceful little church that rested confidingly in the midst of them.

From the firs and the church sloped an undulating greenness of rich meadow land, shaded here and there with single trees ; then the lake, then our garden : the window-frame—ourselves.

How callous were those lovely, lazy clouds, floating in idlest ecstasy, to our human woe !

How rich with purple plenty were those round hills, swelling with the fatness of the land ! And the great unyielding Scotch firs : so long as they sturdily looked up to Heaven, they cared nothing for human sorrow.

But the little church : she lay there, our pretty young mother, whom I had never seen, of whom no one had spoken to me, whose name I could not utter. But I had thought of her all the more, and was ready to ask of God why was she taken, and I

left? I, who was never to make music to the ear that heard her, as she did?

She lay there. Did she see us now, about to inspect the little every-day things she loved and liked, had used and handled?

Did she see my father sorrowing still, as if his grief was but of an hour's bringing?

What a strange thing is sorrow! At times so monstrous in its incongruity. Again so sublime in its endurance—wayward as any passion, great as any virtue, fleeting as the wind that blows the rose petals, constant as the coming day, persistent as the closing night, clinging like the garment of the soul, cast aside with the worn-out mourning of the body.

These thoughts arose in me as I watched my father wrestling like a hero with a mortal foe, determined that the crime of despair should not taint the faith of his soul; and at the same moment Ferdy was carefully investigating himself

in a little round mirror that hung in a corner of the room, and had for a frame a circlet of little Cupids hanging on one to the other. One might have supposed he was admiring them ; but no, it may be questioned if he noticed the frame at all.

So I looked out again, and imagined to myself that the soft golden silk of the curtains round the window formed a rare frame for the picture of the purpled hills, the opalescent sky, and the deep hazy wood enshrining our mother's grave.

After a while—a solemn pause—my father spoke.

“ Children, the scent in this bottle is peculiar to Ceylon, and is made from the flowers of the jasmine, as attar of roses is extracted in precious drops from rose-leaves. It is very costly. One drop is sufficient to scent wood or silk for years. It is estimated to possess five times the strength and power of any other perfume known. The last time I inhaled it, your mother

threw a little silk handkerchief to me, that had been shut up in a small box, into which she had once dropped a single drop of this essence. There is the box, open it."

Mabel did so, and in it lay a little silk neckerchief, not folded, but as if just thrown in. She took it out, kissed it, and gave it to my father, the scent of jasmine flowers filling the room again like incense.

He too kissed it, and placed it in his breast; then taking some keys from his pockets, he bid her choose which cabinet she liked the best. She selected the cedar one. Upon which he gave her one key, and Pamela the other, bidding them consider the cabinets as their own, but to bring the contents to him that he might divide them.

In Mabel's three first drawers were many cases of jewellery, all of which my father gave to us in turns, as they were brought to him. Ferdy would have had us open

and examine them at once, but Mabel feared for my father's strength.

"But," expostulated Ferdy, "you may have much richer things than Pamela."

"She shall choose her own, afterwards," whispered Mabel in answer.

"You promise, mind?"

And Pamela looked (simplest, dearest heart) so happy to be thus cared for.

Mabel now came to packets of letters and little treasures of childhood, all ticketed. These she would not touch, and my father was satisfied, saying, "It is well; keep them to serve as links to the past. For me, I require nothing to prompt memory."

In the lower drawers were many curious paintings of birds, flowers and trees. In another were quantities of feathers of every bright hue. In a third were shells arranged in order.

"All these," said my father, "are collections made by your great-grandfather. What he undertook to do he never failed

to perform. They are perfect in their order and arrangement. Keep them so, Mabel."

"Yes, father."

Mabel's "yes" always appeared to me to express the entire sentence of another person. It had about it the fervour of a vow, with the simplicity of truth.

In a large, deep drawer, opened by a small spring within another drawer, the trickery of which my father described to her, were three more cases of jewellery.

My father opened the largest, and, for the first time, we saw a suite of diamonds.

I acknowledge to have been disappointed in the effect they produced. Neither did I appreciate the setting. The diamonds I thought would have looked better in shining rows, rather than frittered into stiff likenesses of heaven-painted flowers.

"You are the eldest, Mabel, take these, they are a collection of diamonds made from time to time in the family. They were reset,

in one uniform way, for your mother; she never wore them but once. If I remember right, her grandfather did not like the manner in which they were arranged. For myself, I know nothing about jewels, either plain or set. And he was an excellent judge. He liked these better."

And my father opened the next case, and there lay, on purple velvet, a number of pearl ornaments. They were made up in the form of knots of ribbon, with a little chain of rubies connecting them together. There was a necklace, bracelets, hair ornaments, and they all unlinked, if necessary, and could be arranged in another form.

"These shall be yours, Pamela; if not quite so valuable as the diamonds,—there is nowhere known a set of pearls like these, linked together with rubies. But of all things that Mr. Seaton prided himself upon was this,"— and opening the third case, there lay, in one long row, a necklace of

single pearls, each matching the other in form, shape, and colour. They looked like large drops of milk congealed, with the iris-coloured rays of a setting sun reflected upon them.

“I do not know how long he was collecting these pearls, but almost all his life; and he valued each single pearl at forty pounds. He loved to see her wear it, and was ever ready to tell the tale of each. He christened them by various names, according to the trouble, the adventures, and the expense he underwent to obtain them. It was the last thing she wore, she had it on that evening,—take it, child,—the elder Rose left it for the younger.”

Mabel, in obedience to a nervous sign from her father, clasped it round my neck, and I stood before him, that he might see it.

“Some day, Mabel, some day soon, dress her in the white muslin dress you will find in the next room. I should like once more to see the vision I so doted on.”

“Yes, father,” and she took from his hands the keys that he held out to her.

Pamela and Ferdy were holding a discussion over the sets of diamonds and pearls while this was going on.

“I should think,” said Ferdy, “two suites might be made out of this one,” pointing to the diamonds.

Then I knew Mabel and Pamela would have to change: Ferdy always preferred glitter to beauty.

It now became Pamela’s turn to open her cabinet, over the contents of which Ferdy kept a vigilant guard. But my father heeded no remonstrance, giving away in turns to us, all that was handed out to him.

The jewellery in this cabinet was old-fashioned, consisting of etui cases, enamelled and embossed watches, chatelaines, and curious old lockets, with foreign chains and rings. In all of these Ferdy came in for a fourth share, and was as pleased as a boy with a new possession.

Four other drawers contained lace, which we three girls were to use and divide as we liked, my father professing to know nothing of its value.

Pamela now produced cases of miniatures, over which we dwelt with all the interest of young hearts, seeking to read their own likeness and destiny in those who have gone before. We traced family resemblances running through all. Mabel had certainly the Pomeroy nose, which was straight, and delicately cut, with the nostril thin and pink-hued. My father's was the same.

Pamela had the full, red, sensitive lips of the lady who was much put about by her company, and as we came to the portraits of those but immediately before us, the likenesses were more palpable. Mabel's forehead resembled our grandmother's, broad, indented down the centre, with a blue vein running in the distinct form of a "v." The temples high and fully

developed,—a large, beautiful, thoughtful forehead, with fine eyebrows, a little arched, underneath which her eyes looked out clear, full—purely blue. Their general expression was reflecting, and you could foresee the answer she was about to give ere she uttered it. She inherited her eyes from our great-grandfather Seaton, and a chin with a cleft in it. Pamela had her mother's eyes, nose, and forehead; and in their present expression, her eyes were fathomless in the dark softness of their colour.

There was a little miniature of our mother, in a white muslin dress, with the string of pearls round her throat; its opal clasp being the only coloured thing in the picture.

My father looked at it long and lingeringly; then as by an effort, for the great sighs heaved his breast, as they came up from his heart, he drew out a little case from within his waistcoat.

“ See, children, that was your mother, dressed as I first saw her.”

The fairest little dewy face, so fresh, so shy, so child-like, life beaming out of the half-startled eyes. Fair fawn-coloured hair floating round the rosy face like a mist. A little girl’s dress of brown Holland buttoned at the throat with a blue button, and a little frill of lace round the little white throat. A handful of ferns and wild flowers lay in the straw hat she held in her hand.

“ Ah,” exclaimed Ferdy, snatching the picture from Mabel, “ that is she, her very self, the evening we first saw her, when I, when—I was a boy then, quite a boy—she has that look, so surprised at me ; I always show my feelings—didn’t I, Linton ? and she was startled. Upon my soul, I can’t tell why, I was rather a handsome boy, wasn’t I, Linton ? ”

Finding his remarks unheeded, Ferdy relinquished the picture, and turned to

survey himself in the little glass surrounded by Cupids.

It was not its beauty, its sweet simplicity, that fascinated us, her children. But it was an indescribable charm. She was a girl like ourselves ; she had gone to heaven, no older than the lovely image in the muslin gown and pearl necklace. She was never to be old, but always in her bloom. And when we are united to her, what shall we be? Old, faded, in dotage ! Ah, never ! The thought was dreadful.

So we, girls, gazed at our girl mother, who was always to be such, and felt a longing to be with her, that the cares of this world might not age and wither us ere we met her face to face.

And an inexplicable weight of earth seemed to press us down, dismaying us with the cold sadness of its touch, unlike the light, the life, the glowing beauty of the picture. Our future was unknown, a misty darkness loomed out before us. Hers

was already glorious, the beauty of her earthly frame etherialised with the eternal bloom of Paradise. Our father signed hastily for the picture. "It never leaves me," he said hurriedly, "never; I am chilled without it."

Mabel ran for wine.

It revived him a little. Then we drew his chair to the window, full in the sunshine, and he lay with closed eyes, clasping the picture close.

CHAPTER XVI.

“Oh! all unhappy seems the air I breathe,
All cloudy, and all hopeless seems the sky;
And I could e'en despair and give all up
But for my certain faith in the good Spirit
That righteth all we leave unto His hand.”

ANON.

MEANWHILE we placed our treasures reverently back into the receptacles wherein they had so long rested. It seemed sacrilege to remove them from whence our mother had put them. We had no wish to break the charm of their being hers, by claiming them as our own.

Those given to Ferdy had not belonged individually to her, so he was welcome to take them away, which he did.

All day our father remained in the Cedar room, brooding, it might be, for he was

silent, and lay with his eyes closed. He did not ask for his beloved books, he took (with trouble it seemed) the food we brought him, scarce regarding the slight efforts we made for a little notice.

At night, while Ferdy and Pamela were still whispering love's follies on the terrace, he suddenly rose, and taking a taper from the table, he said, "God bless you, children!" and passed on to the inner room, closing the door after him.

Perhaps, we thought with awe, he had never entered it since he had been to take a last look at the dead face of her who had been his life.

We crept softly away, praying to God to comfort our father once again, as He had done then, soothing him with the certainty that the bitterest pang. was past. The blighted hope of sixteen years ago was putting forth buds, that bore the everlasting hues of Paradise, and when it pleased God that they should bloom fully, mortal woe

would be lost in the tide of fullest bliss to him. But to us, could we anticipate

“That Hope from a heavenly note flies on
To a note more heavenly still, that is near?”

or rather, that our father’s release from an overburdened coil of earth, might throw back the weight upon us, encumbering us (so lightly laden hitherto) with weary mortality, to the fretting away of life, with woes and mischances?

Such thoughts knocked at our hearts, Mabel and I, as we sat on the upper step of the great staircase, waiting for Pamela to join us.

We heard her light laugh, musical with happiness, but it awoke no echoing sound within us, adding rather to the pressure that seemed to make itself felt, but was nameless and inexplicable.

We heard Ferdy’s intended whisper, as he wished her “good night.” But as he gloried in all his deeds, the veil that a deep and sanctified love casts over the hoarded secret of the heart, was unknown to him,—he

paraded his love with the mingled feelings of self-laudation and a delight in novelty. It was not exactly new to him to be beloved, but it was unprecedented being openly an engaged lover.

The night was silent; the moon, calm and cold, sent long silver rays in and out through the dark oaken balustrades, showing the flowers that I had placed there, all with folded petals and drooping heads, asleep. She had no warmth in her luminous light, to awaken them up, that they might see how she veiled them over with pearly hues,—all scintillant and lustrous—clad in a beauty not their own.

“Yes, Rose,” said Mabel aloud, answering the question I had spelt to her, with the moonbeams lighting my fingers. “They are unconscious of their fair radiance, even as those in shadow know not that they are in darker gloom. But both will feel alike to-morrow, when the sun shines on them. Yes, so it will be with us. Night is

closing round—shadows are gathering from unknown caverns, some for sorrow, for blight, for despair—but the moonbeams are there also, and touch all, even the darkest, with a rim of light—and then there is the sun to-morrow. The apprehension of evil is at times greater than the evil itself,—so that the prospect of its torments more than its reality. This must not be the case with us, Rose. We must hope always. We are entered for the race of life—we cannot obtain the prize until the goal is won, which is happiness. You fear nothing? A noble spirit disdaineth the malice of fortune! True, Rose, but it is not our fortune that must distinguish us, or the fate that is in store for us, but the manner in which we endure it. Our minds seem oppressed alike, you say, with coming evil. It is so. But, with this portent, which lowers ominously and pertinaciously, there arises also a feeling of courage to perform, and of

spirit to endure, that is alike without language to express for what, or how much. That is a moonbeam, you say—good, it shall be so, but I will not sleep, as your flowers do, unconscious of the light. I will the rather be wakeful, ever watching. For so many hundred years, the Lovels of Lovel-Leigh seemed to have had no misfortune like ‘other folk,’ but have abided, as did the Shunamite, in one place, contented and full of serene happiness. ‘I dwell among mine own people.’

“That might well be the motto of the Lovels.

“The time, perhaps, has come, when we are to be made to feel the insecurity of our homestead. The first blow has fallen on our father. It is true, he has suffered enough for a generation of sinners. But we read of kingdoms swept away, Rose, and I presume that the weakness of human nature requires constant purging,—and that families arise, flourish, spread, and

then as rapidly disappear, to make way for others. You would like to know who will have Lovel-Leigh, and if they will delight in it, as we have done? Well, your conjectures have skipped a long way beyond mine. I shall be satisfied to know that we 'may live and die at Lovel-Leigh, without caring to learn who has it afterwards. Here she is coming at last. You won't permit any love nonsense, you say. No doubt it is pleasant to those who like it, and kindled but once in a lifetime, there is the less reason to cavil at it. I like to see people in earnest."

Acting according to the tenor of her words, as Pamela came up the stairs, in and out of the moonbeams that illumined her white figure, and scintillated a sort of halo round her head, Mabel ran down to greet her, and they met together, like happy angels long parted,—each on some errand of mercy, which lightened up their forms and faces with a radiance divine.

And if there was a tender air of pitifulness in the one sister, attesting the ordeal of human pangs — the other glowed with feelings beyond all mortal pleasure, as if the world and all within it, was tinged with the hues of the silvery moonbeams, pure as heaven itself.

And they whispered together, these two souls born in one hour, until the happiness of the one was caught by the other, and one feeling possessed both. Oh! happy age! when youth is so young, it sees only buds of brightest promise on every side. Oh! happy age! when youth is so trusting, it beholds good in the very stones. Oh! happy age! when youth is so strong, nothing daunts it, but its courage rises, even with the beatings of the heart.

No blight has nipped a bud as yet. No lie has shaken the faith. And the bravery of the heart rises with the consciousness of its own virtue ; daring all things, hoping all things, enduring to the end.

Our father showed symptoms of his sad vigil on the morrow, more by bodily weakness than mental gloom.

He was calm, even cheerful, and there was a serenity in his eyes, as if some holy vision had been vouchsafed him, that brought peace and healing to his soul.

The cedar rooms were prepared for his use, by his express desire, and we brought up all his books, writing materials, and the different things he daily used.

In answer to Ferdy's somewhat querulous (Ferdy's sins in my eyes were the less venial, because so feminine) remonstrances that he was not to be married immediately, offhand, at once, my father told him it was his own fault,—as long as he delayed seeking a lawyer to execute the necessary matters that must be arranged ere he married, so much longer would he have to wait.

Under the influence of this reproof, and the more important fact, that Mabel placed

paper and ink before him, and put a pen into his hand, he wrote the following letter. Though I have accused him of being feminine, his handwriting was as large and unformed as a school-boy's, and he had a habit of blotting each sentence as he wrote it; for Ferdy was one of those people who always expend a vast deal of energy upon nothing.

“DEAR ALGY,

It is all over. I am the happiest of men. What will the world say when 'tis known? I would have written before, but, upon my soul, I have not had a moment. My dearest girl required every thought of my heart.

“Come as soon as you like,—no more time.

“Yours,

“F. H.”

“Who is Algy?” asked Mabel, as he gave her the letter to fold.

“Algy! Oh! the lawyer Linton wishes to see.”

“I saw the whole of the letter, Ferdy. Had you agreed with him before to come?”

“Why, yes, I think I did. Algy is a sort of—that is, Algy is, and always has been, one of my best friends. He is a wonderfully clever man, upon my soul, he is the cleverest fellow—”

“We can believe it, without the help of your soul, Ferdy.”

“You are so severe, Mabel. I believe you have no feeling in you.”

“Yes, I shall be angry if you don’t direct your letter at once.”

“Ah! to be sure, I forgot that; here goes.

“ALGERNON RIVERS, Esq.,
“New Square, Lincoln’s Inn,
“London.”

CHAPTER XVII.

“To beguile the time,
Look like the time ; bear welcome in your eyes,
Your hand, your tongue ; look like the innocent flower,
And be the serpent under it.” SHAKSPEARE.

ALGERNON RIVERS ! Mr. Rivers ! I recall the time when we uttered this name with equal indifference and apathy. . Mabel superintended the preparation of two apartments for him, more intent upon the fulfilment of her functions as mistress of her father's house, than on care for her unknown visitor. Perhaps had she been able to look down the long vista of futurity, she might have spared the last little attentions performed by her own hand. The vase of flowers, the newest books, the screens, footstool, reading chair and lamp. In caring

thus for him, had she thought so much of him as to consider whether he was old, and required easy chairs and strong lights ? or young, that he might worship flowers and pretty china ? or middle-aged, that he would wish for the latest magazines, the last "Saturday Review," and such strong mental meats with which to nourish his town wisdom, suddenly brought down to vegetate on country platitudes ? Supposing I can vouch for feelings experienced so long ago, I think if she regarded Mr. Rivers at all, it was with distaste. I can recall her saying :

" Our father might have asked John Clifford to recommend a lawyer. I think Ferdy and Mr. Rivers appear to have made some previous arrangement, that is more for their benefit than ours."

But what was repugnant to Mabel, bore a different aspect to our father. He was pleased to employ a friend of Ferdy's, one who appeared to have been kind to him ; of

whom he spoke with such confidence, as well as affection. So high-souled was our father, it was a gratification to him that, in this arrangement of his affairs, the legal adviser of his intended son-in-law should be the only one employed on both sides. He expressed his pleasure in directing us to prepare everything, both in ourselves and the house, to do honour to our new guest.

The Forbes and Cliffords were asked to dinner, their company being all the gaiety at our command. The carriage was sent to meet Mr. Rivers at Rudchester, and when it returned with him, he was ushered at once into my father's presence, upon whom I was attending.

He had just been inquiring from me as to the dresses my sisters would wear, saying:

“I would not have this man of the world, straying into our Arcadia, reflect upon us in any way. If we do seclude ourselves, let it not be said there were good and desirable reasons for so doing. But I

would the rather he should say we do the world a wrong, not to let it see that refinement and simplicity, blending together, make a more perfect whole than separated."

As he uttered these words, Mr. Rivers was announced.

A tall, well-made man; but for the first few moments I could distinguish nothing but the supercilious air with which he carried his head, and the evident self-approbation that he possessed. But these gave way before the high-bred courtesy of my father, or more probably he had pictured the family of Lovel to his mind's eye according to Ferdy's vague ideas, and was for the moment stirred into a state of surprise,—a condition but rarely his, I thought, as I looked at him, and detected the signs of it.

A high, round forehead, with no hair on the temples; thick bushy brows, that moved when the rest of his face was motionless. Most supple they were in arching, and compressing themselves with no visible emotion

to assign as the cause. Underneath them were eyes of the palest blue—colourless and inexpressive at first sight, but ever and anon there shot out iridescent sparks, so quick, so piercing, I thought that the old enemy of mankind must be concealed within him—malignant as ever.

His nose was handsome, finely formed and arched; his mouth large, but compressed, and bordered with pale thin lips, which made the chin and lower jaw appear unnaturally prominent. He had that sort of skin which is more like soft fine leather than the usual changing complexion of country faces. It would be as impossible to him to blush as to turn pale. Passive, imperturbable, was face and colour. Nothing moved but the flexible brows and the scintillating eyes. But he was certainly not on good terms with his hair,—it lay on his head in colour, shape and texture like a cock of hay.

A few words that passed between him

and Ferdy will best explain the change in his demeanour to my father.

“As usual, Ferdy,” said Mr. Rivers to him, “I am made your victim. It is my own fault, though. No one ought to know you better than I do.”

“Upon my soul—” remonstrated Ferdy.

“Do not trouble to make excuses. Have I not credited myself with all blame ? Mr. Lovel is a man I should delight to honour ; this place is as lovely as any paradise that I might desire ; and your young lady a fitting inhabitant thereof,—and yet you never mentioned Mr. Lovel to me but as ‘poor Linton.’ You only visited this Arcadia when you required money, or had to flee from the entanglements of a too ardent flirtation. And as for your lady-love, I never heard you mention her name until lately ; and you may search the world to match anything so pretty or so fresh !”

“You have not seen her yet, that is her little sister, who is——”

“ Her sister! the other twin, in whom I am interested ?”

“ No, that is Mabel, you have seen neither of the twins ; wait until you see my Pamela, such dreamy eyes, such exquisite hands and feet,” and I saw Ferdy from my seat in the window (they were walking on the terrace), immediately begin to admire his own.

“ You never told me of a third, or rather, you gave me to understand there was a child, who from some mental misfortune could inherit nothing.”

“ That is little Rose ; poor little thing ! I do not see of what use money will be to her.”

“ I perceived nothing the matter with her ; she understood her father’s least sign, and she brought me a book, without even being told, to show me a quotation of his, which was new to me.”

“ Very true, she is clever enough ; but come, I hear the dressing bell. That is the

worst of this place, they are too punctual. We have not even the fraction of a minute given us."

"Then I am safe in hazarding any bet that you are never in time."

Ferdy's light laugh echoed up through the hall as they entered the house.

I ran up before them, with the wreaths I had been making for my sisters' hair.

Nurse met me on the stairs.

"Now, Miss Rose ; always driving your poor nurse to the last minute ; come this instant to be dressed. You must go with your sisters' flowers ? Dear me, and is that all you have got for them, and their papa sending word they were to put on their last new dresses ; a few bit leaves ? Well, well, I'll not deny but leaves is pretty things, and as you say perfect on every tree. To be sure, each perfect, on each tree, the most finished of all God's works. You have pretty ideas of your own, I'll say that for you, Miss Rose, and it's allars been a won-

derment to me as they did come right, and never no mistake. Oh! now don't ye make game of your old nurse; she knows, and long afore ever you did, clever as ye think yerself, as all things must do the bidding of the Almighty. The grass and the corn, and the pretty daisies, must all grow as He bids them, and the proper leaves on the proper trees. And a many different ones there be, as you do say, Miss Rose, none alike, yet all perfect in shape and beauty, and the patterns of them from the very heavens themselves. 'Deed we ought to mind that allars, we poor sinful critters, for the angels couldn't have no prettier or better. Dear me, here's a tanglement; who but me would have patience now to right all this hair? Angels indeed, Miss Rose, I am that shocked at ye; oh, well, I beg your pardon, my dear; truly if we are given the things that angels have, we ought to behave as sitch, if us can. So I'll be patient with your hair, Miss, and don't ye forget your

manners either, for that matter, and sit you quiet, until it's done. You must have your grandfather's locket? Well, so you shall, and them be pretty beads enough to hang it on to. Oh! ye're vexed, are ye, my dear? How should I know which is pearls, and which is beads? It weren't in my eddication to larn, and if so be as they cost all that money, I had as lief have only beads, and the money in my pocket. Money is money, never you forget that, Miss Rose. That's true, it mayn't be happiness, but it brings it, which is more nor you can say of beads; pearls, I beg your pardon, my dear. There now, let me fasten your white silk frock, and then you shall go. It's a pity there is no one to see my little jewel but those that have seen her often, and that's my one concern when I dresses you, Miss Rose. There is some one this time? Hoot! nought but a lawyer, and I must hang ye about wi' musty parchments, ere ever he 'll look at ye. Ay, well, ye 'll please your father, no

doubt. He just worships the looks of you ; but ye'll mind, Miss Rose, that it's your dear mamma he's thinking on ; and don't ye forget that the Almighty has put a mark on ye, to keep yer pride down, otherwise you might get rampaging, with the master just idolising you, and yer sisters spoiling ye, past everything, to say nothing of your silly old nurse. Bless your dear heart, my darling ! " returning my kiss, as I left her.

CHAPTER XVIII.

“ We must not give implicit credence
To every warning voice that makes itself
Be listened to in the heart.” COLERIDGE.

I LINGERED on the staircase, partly to wait for my sisters — partly because strange thoughts seemed to rise, as I slowly stepped from one stair to a lower one. Would our new visitor admire the fancy that had turned the massive balustrades into a trellis-work for the support of such frail loveliness as flowers ? Had he no sight, no feeling, as nurse hinted, but for parchments ? Would he prove as disagreeable to me as Ferdy, though from over-wisdom, rather than the lack of it ? The family sin of

seclusion rose strongly within me—or the oppression of some coming evil, the second-sight gift possessed by our great-grandfather, weighed me down. We had been taught the everlasting plaint, that man is born to misery—but misery had never come within hail of us. We knew of no greater grief than the loss of a pet bird, the withering of a favourite flower,—or the driving of a sudden storm, that imprisoned us within the house. As vague and therefore fearful conceptions rose, born one of the other, I caught myself asking, “Of what use is life, to be dashed thus with tremors?” I could wish I was a flower—or that no one lived who did not dwell as we did—in a beautiful home, with all things to love, with no wish for change, no desire to encroach one on the other. Mr. Rivers was an encroacher—he coveted something of ours—he had willed to have it, and would have it—at our cost. Cost of what? Money! Well I did not seem to care to be

poor. In truth I did not understand the full meaning of the word. To leave Lovel-Leigh did not appear to me to be the attestation of poverty. So that, still dwelling there, poverty bore no dismal look to my eyes. It was no disgrace, only privation — What could I live without? Ah! numberless things doubtless. I would reckon them up some day, but at present Mr. Rivers might have as much money as he wished. I would not begrudge it him, provided he left us, and never came back.

Was it Mabel whom he had willed to have ? *

“ The other twin in whom I am interested.” That is what he had said. An unknown creature, a lawyer, a man loving parchments and ugly things, desiring to possess, and call his own, our Mabel, of whom it might truly be said, we that knew her well, knew nothing like her.

Without doubt we might not only be prejudiced, but had small experience. Nevertheless it was not our judgment alone.

Our great-grandfather had predicted she would fail in nothing she undertook to do —because, he added, she was modest, and would be well assured of her power to perform, ere she commenced.

Mr. Clifford, that morose, covetous, cynical soul, had inadvertently commended her scores of times. He had been heard to lament Miss Lovel was not a man, she had such a clear head for business. He had been known to be swayed by her reasons, and act upon them. Once he had made her a present—it was only a little game hen, but as he had never been known to commit such a deed before, it was all the more flattering.

Mr. Forbes accorded Mabel so high a rank in his estimation, that her suggestions regarding the parish were always carried out, let Mrs. Forbes remonstrate her loudest—and even she solicited Miss Lovel's good opinion, by heeding what she said, and granting her the compliment, that she was, like herself, sensible and far-seeing.

As for Mrs. Clifford and John Clifford, prejudiced as we might be, their love for Mabel amounted to more, and was not even by themselves considered a rational sentiment. She was their idol openly and avowedly. They delighted in every display of their worship, consistently with the bounds in which the object of it rigorously kept them.

“Providence,” said Mrs. Clifford, “generally places people in the station the duties of which they best fulfil. Now Miss Lovel is born to command—she is always thinking good thoughts, and conceiving great ones—her nature is like the nature that God gave us from the first. Which reminds me of water, a spring of water. We are all born with this pure spring. And in some it overflows, pouring out its fertilising properties like a little brook, doing good wherever it flows. In others it is congealed, like ice. No good action on earth moves them, no great ones thaw

them. John says he is often tempted to think that animals enter into men, for he could name several on two legs, who show by their manners that they ought to go on four."

Or crawl! The glitter in Mr. Rivers's eyes kept rising before my mind as the glitter of a snake. In the midst of my thoughts, I had not heard his step on the stairs behind me. And he was there looking down into my face, as I stood on some lower steps than he did, with those strange eyes.

But they were not unpleasant this time. They had a kindly look in them, and the tumbled hay on his head bore signs of some attempt to arrange it. He hastily gathered a flower that peeped up close by his hand, and with some awkwardness he presented it to me.

In an instant there ran through me the perception that, if I had been thinking about him, his thoughts had been equally

excited with regard to us. His assumption was gone. His air of "I came, I saw, I commanded," was displaced for one of deference. And as the first was natural, and the other assumed, it was sitting awkwardly on him. I should like to have known, if he had ever even gathered, much less presented, a flower before. I was persuaded, as if he had said it, that he could no more have told the name of the flower he presented to me, than I could have drawn up one of his parchments.

Meantime, what had been his thoughts? while I, beginning with the uppermost step to wonder if our new guest admired flowers, had almost at the last decided he was a serpent, an enemy, a thing destined by God from the beginning to creep the earth.

I imagined he had thought thus:

"I have gained entrance into a family that are unknown to the world, and wish to live unknown, court seclusion, and are content with no other society than that of

each other. Mr. Lovel, I have always heard mentioned by Ferdinand Home as 'poor Linton.' He acknowledged that he was nervous, an invalid. He loved Ferdy, appeared to regard him with affection, faith; that foolish Ferdy, whom I would not trust out of eyesight, whom I have no sooner greeted than I care not how soon I say farewell. From all these circumstances I argue that 'poor Linton' is worthily named. He does wisely to seclude himself. But he is rich, he has only daughters, and means to endow them equally with all his wealth. With much gratitude, as I am told, he has promised one of his daughters to that foolish, vain Ferdy. Why should not I, infinitely his superior, obtain another? I am rising in my profession, but I should rise with much greater rapidity if I had a rich wife. Ferdy shall take me to this Arcadia; I will satisfy myself that he has not boasted overmuch regarding their wealth, though I may be certain he

would not sacrifice himself to matrimony without ample compensation. I will do him that justice, and I will look at the young lady. If all is satisfactory, I will proceed at once to conclude the affair.

“But at the very onset I am deceived. As usual, Ferdy’s vanity has perverted the truth. Very far from deserving the name of ‘poor Linton,’ Mr. Lovel is rich,—rich in talent, in attainments, in courtesy, in all things—rich in resources in himself. He has nothing to seek for in the world. He would lose rather than gain by mixing in it, and he knows it.

“But he has a weakness, ’tis an infirmity of the heart, I must take advantage of it. He loves one infinitely his inferior, and in the greatness of that love has invested Ferdy with part of the faith and exaltation of his own character. He shall do the same by me. And I derive a pleasure from the thought. Inexplicable as it appears to me, coldblooded, imperturbable,

perhaps self-assured, I yet feel within me the desire to be liked and appreciated by Mr. Lovel; and if his daughter should at all resemble him, then the accomplishment of my desire will be all the more exciting because less easy. Let me consider the battle-field on which I am about to wage war.

“There is a breastwork of reserve against me, strong through natural inheritance, and still stronger from education. It will take me some time to break through that fortress, to be admitted on the footing of friendship, not of business or necessity. Then, if she has her father’s intellect—well, I don’t fear it. To the daring there is pleasure in adventure, to the energetic a desire for contest. High natures are moved by deeds rather than words. I shall essay her that way; and I have this advantage over most lovers, I am not by nature susceptible. I shall not lose my

own individuality for that of another, I shall retain my proper self-respect, or in short, I am not likely to make a fool of myself for love : as a cool and wary general I shall watch mine enemy closely, and spy out weaknesses, of which I will take every advantage. 'Tis impossible but the girl must have some. Meantime I must adopt a little of Ferdy's arts. I must forget the lawyer and begin the character of wooer. I feel no doubt that such a father is doted upon by daughters. It will not be irksome to pay my court through him. I shall feel more at home devoting myself to him. My hair, I fancy, looks untidy, suppose I comb it thus. For the life of me I cannot tell if I look better or worse with it so. I saw Ferdy gather a flower for his beloved. I will not forget that little duty to the whole family."

So thus it happened that the tumbled hay was smoothed, and that I was pre-

sented with a flower, and that we stood together on the stairs, he becoming more embarrassed every minute because no thanks followed his courteous act to me.

CHAPTER XIX.

“I do not know the man I should avoid
 So soon * * *

He reads much ;

He is a great observer, and he looks
 Quite through the deeds of men :

* * * * *

Seldom he smiles ; and smiles in such a sort,
 As if he mock'd himself, and scorn'd his spirit
 That could be moved to smile at anything.”

SHAKSPEARE.

I LOOKED up the stairs to see if any one
 was coming, and down the stairs for the
 same purpose.

“Have you lost anything ?” suggested
 Mr. Rivers.

I shook my head, and placing my flower
 in my sash, I curtseyed my thanks, just
 touching my mouth with my fingers.

He was very quick to understand, and such genuine pity filled his eyes, that I felt grateful to him. I had suffered from the dulness of people who would not understand my infirmity, more than once, solitary as we had lived. In another minute my father appeared, leaning on Mabel's arm.

I drew aside, and watched Mr. Rivers's face. He had been so quick to understand my sign, that I wished to see if he divined this was "the twin in which he was interested."

He did. And perhaps for this reason. Mabel had that peculiar dignity which is so attractive when joined to youth. Her serene life had hitherto known no check, and the health that bloomed on her cheeks and lips shone out of her eyes, and coursed through every vein, animating her whole being with the pleasantness of life. To this cheerfulness was joined a lofty exaltation of spirit, unconscious of distrust or doubt. Her code of life knew of no other

distinction than honour and dishonour, of which one she loved with all the passion of a noble mind, casting the other from her, as an evil permitted in the world, by God's decree, for the punishment of those who looked, like Lot's wife, behind them.

She had no thoughts but what accorded with the beauty and serenity of her aspect, and as she came down the stairs, my father's feeble steps supported with such ease by her elastic, firm frame, Mr. Rivers, I felt, was saying to himself,

“This is my twin, this girl could never love that foolish, vain Ferdy.”

He also decided not again to do violence to his natural habits, by presenting her with a flower. He paid her the instant compliment of comprehending he had better be Mr. Rivers, with all his natural defects, than exert himself to appear free from them. In those clear eyes he read a sagacity without prejudice, and a truthfulness, that knew no hesitation.

As for Mabel's first impression of Mr. Rivers, it was openly expressed to us.

"He looked clever, and she hoped he would speedily exert his talents to relieve her father's mind. He was not a gentleman born, but still he was quick in assuming the habits of those he lived with. I think better of Ferdy than I did, since so clever a man takes such an interest in him, without possessing a heart as tender as our father's. Unless, indeed, they are relations. There is a similarity in their voices."

After his introduction to Mabel, and subsequently to Pamela (who always lingered until the latest moment, for one dear private word with Ferdy, ere they joined us, and which she rarely got, through his well-known tardiness), Mr. Rivers justified Mabel's opinion, by falling at once into familiar conversation with the family. But unconsciously, as he felt more at ease, he assumed somewhat of the superciliousness that had attracted my notice upon his first

entrance, and under the influence of this offered his arm to Mabel, to take her into dinner. The well-bred haughtiness with which she waved him aside, and went to her father's assistance, told him more than that this was her daily duty. He had encroached upon her prerogative as lady of the mansion, and had been (world-wise though he might be) guilty of ill-breeding in assuming a position to which he had no title, unless she accorded it to him.

His smooth, dark skin was incapable of colouring, but out of his eyes shot a shower of sparks. The old serpent rose defiant for the moment.

Ere he was seated at dinner, he had to confess to himself that he deserved the lesson; and if this knowledge was humiliating to a self-love that had received but few checks, I imagine it only excited him to win the day yet. Every action as yet enhanced the value of the prize.

At times I caught the cold light eyes

fixed upon Mabel with an intensity of vision that would have embarrassed one less enshrined in maiden dignity and worth. He appeared to be measuring her capabilities to resist his will; and if the array against him assumed a more formidable appearance each time he gazed, it but moved him to prepare the more for the struggle; a quick surrender of reason to love, he intuitively felt, would be ruin to his cause. His whole array of worldly wisdom, man's prerogative, and all of which he could boast, would be conquered and destroyed by no stronger weapon than a girl's innocence.

No; by slow, unremitting, ever watchful care must he undermine the fortress in which she had secured her heart. She could not be wholly without a weak point. That weak point his penetration could not fail to discover. In fact, he had a clue to it already.

There was a touch of family pride lurking within the shrine that treasured up the

impulses of her fine nature. And the little germ fed and nourished itself, with such innocent sweet food as reverence and admiration for her father.

He was to her as the masterpiece of mankind, the model or hero, that imperceptibly is pictured to the sensitive mind as superior to the rest of the world. Every woman creates a paragon in her soul for whom she seeks ; and when found he is to be that one being who is to reconcile the discords of life—diffusing an everlasting spring around, blossom-laden, and all coloured with rosy hues, and purpling buds of promise, that open and expand in the sternest soil.

Mr. Rivers did not lightly regard the difficulty—that Mabel's love for her father was of so deep and profound a character, that he was likely to prove a serious rival in the way of any other love. But it would become him, as a good and experienced general, to turn this, her safeguard, into a breastwork for his own operations,

and by setting up Mr. Lovel also as an idol to worship, undermine the fortress by the very means of its strength.

Should (and this he could not but fear might be the case) her quick perception trace a motive in all he said and did—or, still more probable, the refinement of her taste and nature only so far attract her notice to himself as to draw a displeasing contrast between her father and himself, still he had other resources. He would make himself necessary to her father; no great difficulty, he conceived, in doing that. He was not the only lawyer who ruled and swayed a whole family by the mere flourish of his pen. He would make himself so essential to Mr. Lovel, that the daughter, through love for her father, should accord him at least a place in her esteem. For the rest, he thought not so meanly of his own abilities as to doubt the issue.

But he must have time.

Therefore, as his watchful eye glanced

round and noted everything, he decreed, as he saw love passages passing between Ferdy and Pamela, that they should not marry until Mabel was in some sort pledged to him. By this means he secured Ferdy as an ally, which, without the stimulus of self-interest, he knew that volatile disposition would never consent to be ; and though Ferdy, intrinsically, had no great weight, the twin sister, moved by Ferdy's wishes, might prove all-powerful.

It is presumed that all these thoughts passed through the mind of Mr. Rivers, on this, the first evening of his admittance into Lovel-Leigh. The assumption for this opinion lies in the subsequent acts of a drama that was not the less strange because it was true.

Our father enjoyed his evening—his languid eyes brightening under the influence of Mr. Rivers's conversation, which was clever, and full of lively anecdotes of present people and things. If his sensitive

ears shrank now and then from an ungenerous sentiment, a derisive scoff, or an unmannerly word, Mr. Rivers was quick to notice it, and as quick to repair his error.

No business was discussed between them for a few days—"because," said Mr. Rivers, "I should wish to be thoroughly acquainted with your family affairs, before I tender my advice. At least so much of them as you desire me to know."

During that time, we gave our little entertainment to the Forbes and Cliffords, the only gaiety in our power to bestow on Mr. Rivers. Mr. Clifford, distrusting and suspecting all womankind, had a blind credulity in favour of the male sex, which might be said to amount to the idol-worship of a golden image that bore the similitude of a lawyer.

It gave that gentleman very little trouble to gain his approbation, if a grim chuckle of satisfaction might be so named—and still less for him to read Mr. Clifford's character.

“He is universally cramped,” I heard him say to my father; “honest, no doubt, to the uttermost fraction, but his mind is capable of no other effort than reckoning up money, while his hands have that species of contraction that opens only when there is something to grasp.”

Mr. Forbes was as little concerned about Mr. Rivers as became a man who was not allowed an opinion; while of the two ladies, Mrs. Clifford disliked, and Mrs. Forbes delighted in our new inmate; and he regarded all three with equal indifference and superciliousness.

CHAPTER XX.

“Talk not of wasted affection, affection never was wasted;
If it enrich not the heart of another, its waters re-
turning
Back to their springs, like the rain, shall fill them
full of refreshment:
That which the fountain sheds forth, returns again
to the fountain.” LONGFELLOW.

AND so the days passed on.

By degrees we grew so much more accus-
tomed to Mr. Rivers, that what had grated
on our touchy sensitiveness became less
dissonant, and we ceased to heed it.

Perhaps he gained from us a little of
the harmony and gentleness that governed
our intercourse with each other, created by
the soft sympathies of a fading life, and
the loving nature of our girlish hearts.

At times he had great powers of expression, of an exalted and pleasing kind—but like the beautiful frostwork on a window-pane, created in an hour, and disappearing at a breath, so did these rise and vanish, leaving no trace behind.

There were no acts on his part, slight or great, by which we could form an opinion of his character—and while he bent all his energies to make himself master of ours, he forgot that we must necessarily know something of him, ere we accorded him an interest. He was like a sealed book.

He had no reverence for flowers. He cared nothing for country beauties. He would never have sought our laurel walks for winter coolness, during the heat of summer, or remembered that they would yield him summer's beauty in winter's frost.

The long sloping lawns had few charms for his eyes with their expanse of pure verdure. He read no heavenly poetry in the skies, the stars, the changing wonders

in the firmament. He could not open the six days volume of the book of God, and imagine the world forming, as he read.

His soul dwelt only with men, and all their doings; and in mastering the secret of controlling and governing them, he had lost sight of the great and good things that enoble man's nature, and fit him to sit firmly in the throne of kings.

But for the ostensible purpose for which he was introduced among us, no one could have suited my father better; and by degrees he unfolded to him all his wishes with regard to the future; while Mr. Clifford was desired to make known to him every particular that had reference to the property.

“ You design,” said Mr. Rivers one day to my father, “ that the two younger daughters, provided Miss Pamela is the younger twin —”

“ It matters not — their names can be mentioned in full.”

“ Clearly so, it will prevent all mistake. You design that these two should divide their mother’s fortune of 10,000*l.*, while Miss Lovel should succeed to the personals, as an equivalent.”

“ That is my wish.”

“ These personals include any ready money of which you may die possessed, the furniture and all things belonging to the house or estate. Now suppose Miss Lovel should marry a man possessed already with house and estate—one who does not desire to live at Lovel-Leigh—is she to have power to do what she likes with these personals ? ”

“ Yes ; she is one to be trusted with full power.”

“ And the presumed husband ? ”

“ No presumed husband of either of my daughters is to have power to sell, mortgage, anticipate, or in any sort control their inheritance, except after such manner as my daughters may choose to pay over to them the half-yearly rental, which I design

should be paid clear into their own hands. They have mixed so little with the world—(my fault)—that it becomes me to guard them from an inexperience of it, the more so as their position may attract round them the very persons I should least desire to see in their company."

"And for their heirs? Is there no power to be given to ensure succession to the unborn?"

"No, I limit my cares to the children my wife left me. They, in their turn, will not fail to regard those to whom they have given life. I cannot see wherefore I should meddle with the next generation."

"And now with regard to Ferdinand Home: he has debts."

"Of these I have been told. I designed, out of the love and friendship that has existed between us for so many years, to have left him some mark of the gratification it has ever given my poor saddened life to greet his more happy spirit, and leave him a part

of some thousands that I have, without intention, saved. I perceive now it was for a good purpose that this money has, as money will do, gathered itself together. Instead of leaving it to him in my will, he shall have it at once. But the schedule of his debts must be made out, and given to me, because by so much the more that I bestow on him, by so much the less will my daughter Mabel be credited—and though her generous heart will regret nothing bestowed upon her sister's husband, I must be just."

"True, if they amount to more than you expect, he must suffer himself, and his wife's portion be taxed."

"Nay, that is at once trenching upon ground that I have desired should be sacred. Nothing is to be forestalled or mortgaged."

"I had forgotten. I will go to Home at once, and see what I can extract from his volatile brain."

“Not so, either. I wish, with due respect to you, Mr. Rivers, to have no third party between Ferdy and myself. We will discuss the matter between us; but rest assured, if it is his desire, you shall be our only counsellor.”

“Let it be as you will; but I have yet a word to say regarding him. You ought to know him as well as I do. If it was my daughter he was about to marry, I should demand a year's trial of his affection for her.”

“How? His love for my daughter has existed from his childhood.”

“Such may be your opinion, but it is not mine.”

“Mr. Rivers, your words, still more your manner, bid me prepare for something different; but I trust it may be of that sort my Ferdy will not deem me disloyal in listening to it.”

“What I intend saying I would as readily let him hear as not.”

“ Then proceed. I have no secrets from my children,” seeing Mr. Rivers motion his hand towards me.

“ Pardon me; the secret is mine,” he answered. “ At the same time,” staying me as I was about to leave the room, “ let me speak a word, that is of great import to this young lady, before I enter into my own concerns. Are you aware, Mr. Lovel, that to be mute without being deaf is an extraordinary fact ? ”

“ I was not,” answered my father shortly, and shivering, as was his wont, through every nerve when allusion was made to anything that affected him.

“ I am so persuaded of it, I feel convinced that upon medical examination you will find there is no real impediment to prevent Miss Rose speaking, to the full as well as any other person.”

“ Child, my child—Rose, my little Rose,” murmured my father, as he drew me into his arms, where I lay, startled and panting

with a sudden thrill, that was so keen, so poignant, it had more of pain than pleasure in it. To speak, to make music, to send forth as others did with such ease the welling-up thoughts that gathered and gathered until, like air bubbles, they burst and vanished for ever ;—thoughts that seemed born of lovely images and radiant aspirations, of which one grew enamoured, and panted to depict the glowing pictures to hearts like one's own !

I had wondered if speech had powers in excess of thoughts—if the copiousness of the one exhausted the other ; or was it no better than the mute language of signs, confined to certain bounds, as the shore is imprisoned by an unyielding ocean ? Oh, for one hour's trial ! Methought I should be content with that, and return without murmuring to the silent eloquence of signs.

But in this sudden rush of half pain, whole wonder, the real conception of my calamity made itself manifest with an over-

powering force. In this one moment there passed before me the first impression made on my childish mind, that I had to touch people to make my wishes known, and was without the power to sit still and have them fulfilled with no other effort than the movement of my lips.

Then came a species of childish trouble that I could not sing as the birds did, not twitter like the little pert house-sparrow. Even my kitten had a gift of which I was not possessed; and as this trouble grew with my opening sagacity, it increased on perceiving even inanimate objects had a voice—a speech that I was never to know.

There was a soft fluttering sound in the birch-trees that had a charm in it for me. And the mysterious shivering of the aspen leaves, without a breath of wind, led me to wonder if thus they spoke to each other, or did some unseen spirits, resting there in the long flight from their world to ours, sigh

through the branches, oppressed by the heavy atmosphere of earth. And to whom did the poplars speak?—and what did they say? As they bent their tall heads in salutation up so high, no wind came down to tell us of their reasons.

And the wind itself had a voice. Now complaining, now roaring, now chattering and whistling round corners and through keyholes. And when it moaned—but nurse said it was not the wind that moaned. It only bore along the groans and sighs of the fallen angels, that, having forfeited their birthright through pride and rebellion, were imprisoned half way between earth and heaven! And when they sighed in anguish, remembering the joys of Paradise, the wind bore their moans over all the four quarters of the earth, and people shuddered as they heard them. But when saved souls of that lower creature man passed up through their ranks from the inferior earth, to take their forfeited place

in heaven, then cries of envy and despair reverberated through the clouds, and all the winds, collecting together, echoed to each other the dismal sounds, until the stunned earth was torn and riven with the thunder of the blast, and trembling souls prayed in their secret hearts to be delivered from the perils of the tempest.

Even the little flowers had a voice.

The water-lilies rustled in the still evenings of summer as they folded their petals for sleep—bidding good night to the green islets, their leaves, under whose broad roof they sunk and sheltered themselves from the deceiving beams of the moon.

The little wood-anemones, hearing the whispers of the wind, opened their pencilled bosoms with joy, and fluttered a greeting.

The booming bee, the buzzing fly, the chirping grasshoppers, all had a voice—except the living pea-flower. I loved butterflies, they were mute like myself, yet were gay and happy.

As the child's thoughts gave place to graver ones, I became conscious of a want, and at the same time felt the pain of a deficiency, mine only, in all around me. Nothing was so mute as I. The very waters of the lake, rippling with a breeze, gently plashed against the boat, or flung the little hurrying waves with a noisy turbulence on the shore. How often have I sat, and longed to gurgle out such liquid sounds, eloquent of nothing but idlest happiness! If I could but murmur,—murmur—soft and low, how expressive would I make the sound! In every key would I execute the gift,—quick and vivacious for happiness,—full and harmonious for love,—low, intermittent, for sadness—

“Rose, child, calm yourself;” and these words, faintly murmured, brought me back to reality. My father was fainting. My fault!

Mr. Rivers watched with keen interest all we did to revive him, for Mabel came at

my summons ; and while he did so, his eyes had a soft, pitiful look in them, that made him appear an entirely different person.

I could not help wondering, as we sat there bathing my father's hands, what made him assume at times such opposite characters. Had he two spirits dwelling within him,—one good, one bad ? And did they in turns govern him ? And which in the end would conquer ? For now, even as I looked, the glitter of the evil spirit flashed out, for Mabel said with that air of command, none the less imperious, because so gentle,—

“ We can excuse your further attendance, Mr. Rivers ; ” and he was necessitated to obey her with the discomfiture of knowing he ought to have anticipated the wish— and he had not the tact to say so, whereby his exit would have had less the aspect of a dismissal.

When alone, in mute language I ex-

plained to Mabel all that had passed ; our father now falling into the usual sleep that followed all his attacks. Answering me on her fingers, she related that, long ago, she remembered many doctors and clever surgeons being summoned by our father, at various periods, to investigate the cause of my calamity, and while all agreed that the case was extraordinary, none could proffer a remedy. They advised in some instances peculiar treatment, not promising a cure, but rather acknowledging it was an experiment, so our father cared not to burden me too much with trials. One surgeon alone had examined into the family history, as regarded the constitution and health that we inherited ; and he had given it as his opinion, that a peculiar sensitiveness in the nervous portion of our frame ran through us all ; that a shock might annihilate some nerves, or so injure them as to paralyse them ; or, as in my father's case, rack them with a mysterious anguish that made life a burden of periodic torment.

In my case he was inclined to think that the nerves necessary for the performance of speech had been paralysed before my birth, through some sudden pang or shock.

If it was not so, they merely lay dormant, and a strong impulse, an uncontrollable emotion, might cause them to burst the ties that bound them at present; and after the first sound, I should probably, with care, have the proper use of them for the future.

“ And so, Rose, we may some day hear you chattering faster than any of us. You weep,—little darling, I know it is hard. I would it were I, rather than you. You would not?—No, I know it. If you had the speech of a thousand years, you could not more certainly convince me of that. Brave little Rose, with your smiles shining through tears, you think it happy it is you, that is your best comfort. We will think of it no more. You say it is a trifle! Not so—you won’t read any more of that.

Well! Mr. Rivers wishes to delay Pamela's marriage. I am glad. He is wise. Secret or not, if he delays it I shall be grateful to him. Will Pamela suffer? Yes, if Ferdy does,—but otherwise, I think she will like to be ours yet a little while. How long may we keep our father with us? So long would I wish no other claim to come between him and us. He is ours—we are his. Nothing should divide us while we can say so."

CHAPTER XXI.

“Lofty and passionless as date palms wide,
High on the upmost summits of his soul —
Wrought of the elemental light of Heaven,
A pure and plastic flame that soul could show ;
Whose nature like the perfume of a flower
Enriched with aromatic sun-dust, charms
All, and with all ingratiates itself, —
Sat dazzling purity—for loftiest things,
Snow-like, are purest.”

BAILEY.

PAMELA was much hurt at her marriage being delayed ; but, as Mabel anticipated, her regrets were roused more by the turbulent remonstrances of Ferdy than her own disappointment. In the midst of his chorus of lamentations, she ran and kissed Mabel, as if an irresistible impulse of joy made her do so. Yet the next moment she wept, and Ferdy, delighted, wiped away her tears.

Mr. Rivers's secret appeared of sufficient consequence to my father to delay the marriage. And as if satisfied that nothing further was to be done at present, he secluded himself in the cedar rooms, and permitted no one but his daughters to enter them.

Perhaps if Ferdy had desired it, he might have gone in and out as one of the family — but he only lived in a state of effervescent excitement — and there was nothing but tranquil resignation and gentle submission within my father's chamber — both virtues of which he knew nothing but the name.

His petulant anger at the postponement of his marriage lasted half a day — giving place to an eager excitement as to where he should go, and what he should do with himself, for the nine months that must elapse.

So after a few days (having prolonged his stay to the utmost limits) Mr. Rivers

departed, accompanied by Ferdy, the latter evidently the least sorry to go. But even in love, there is a certain pleasure apparently in the parting. There are so many adieus to be said, so much care to be enjoined, as if, separated from the eyes that follow every movement, danger might lurk near, unseen or unheeded. Then the prospect of letters—the first letter of love—who has not felt, upon receiving it, that it contains the written testimony of what was but hearsay,—and bears the look of a solemn testament, signed with the sacred name—sealed with the beloved seal, in colour symbolising his very blood? It lies there, recording in fair characters that she is his own, his life, his heart; and though to be seen by no other eyes, it is to her as the Bible of love, to be studied daily—and each time with renewed interest. The little, fond expressions of love that dropped from the lips, had been treasured in remembrance with a longing to hear them again and again. Now they are immortalised in

characters, and she could read them ever and ever, and never too often.

And her replies, at first a little diffident, and then gathering courage—those feelings that no power could lure her maiden shyness to force through the limits of her blushing lips—pour out on the spotless paper (emblem of the thoughts); and as they pour, so do they gather and encourage each other, until she has disclosed all the hoarded, pent-up feelings of her heart—and she now regards the separation so much bewailed, as the happy means of disclosing the rich treasures of love that she possesses; and deplored it no longer, indulges freely in the new phase of love, that enables her to say so much, at so little cost of her bashful coyness.

And is not that coyness the veil with which the truest, deepest love enfolds itself, permitting now and then a glimpse of the radiant divine spirit to be seen?—for the full blaze of it might dazzle and blind the

beholder. He might be alarmed—perhaps bewildered by its power, seeing not in the future the long years of forbearance, endurance, obedience, that require so rich a hoard of love from which to draw unlimited demands.

No; it is well that the lips of women are sealed by their own modesty, where their love is truest,—and that their life is the test of the power of their affections, and the strength of their endurance.

So our Pamela was happy in her new pleasure; and if she wrote two letters to Ferdy's one, she was at least ignorant that there was anything strange in that. He had much to do, she had nothing. He had told her—in every phrase of which language was capable—how he loved her, adored her, would die for her; she might have whispered it once or twice, in a foolish, cold manner, unlike the glowing words of her heart, but she could not persuade her lips to pronounce them. The pen was totally dif-

ferent. It gave no voice to what she should blush to hear herself say, but wrote, with a silent eloquence, the very love-song her heart was singing—and the more she wrote, the more was she enamoured with the pleasure. We saw one or two of Ferdy's letters—those that spoke of the sensation his intended marriage caused in the gay world he loved so well; and if to us they appeared to assess Pamela's love by the notoriety that his engagement to her gave him, to her they but clenched the rivets of the chain he had wound over every pulsation of her being.

Our father returned to the daily routine of our usual life, with a zest and earnestness that had something of pain in it to us. The shadow of dread accompanied it. He scarce disguised the thought that for the last time we were his only, he ours for every moment of the day. Another innovation, and the memories of childhood and youth would be merged in the business of

life, with which he would have neither interest nor part. The vows, duties, friendships of another world would be thronging at the threshold of Lovel-Leigh. For a time, they had been driven back—but on their return, they would enter conquerors and possessors.

Every happiness that had been ours, my father studied to bring back to us. The sunny days of summer had passed—and with the luscious scents of autumn, came chilly mornings, feathering the flowers with silvered rime, and sprinkling the trees all over with leaves of every shade of gold and brown.

The few days in October, styled St. Luke's summer, were as sunny and warm as golden days in June—and these he enjoyed with us.

Pamela awoke day by day from the, to her, sweet thraldoms of love—and there seemed nothing wanting to make us as happy as our childhood had been, with an

increased perception of its blessings and advantages.

For the gleam of other things, another sort of life, a love different from our father's, brought with it the hesitation and disquietude of ignorance and inexperience. And he faded so rapidly—even we who saw him from day to day could see at short intervals little acts abandoned, insignificant in themselves, but most significant in the warning they spoke to us.

If he exerted himself one day, feeling stronger for the time, he was so much weaker the next day, that he was unable to recover the lost ground.

But he sedulously husbanded all the strength he had, earnestly heeding the physician's advice, and our fond wishes.

“I think it was hardly wise in me to delay your marriage, Pamela.”

“Oh, yes, father, this time seems so blessed to me; I can rest and think over all that I shall do to make him happy.”

Ferdy was already, in her eyes, the responsible party for the one personal pronoun.

“I hope I acted for the best; but to doubt my Ferdy, has always grated somewhat on my mind.”

“Father, after the first moment of disappointment, I was better pleased it should be so arranged.”

“So are we all, say those nimble fingers, and I agree with you, Rose. It is something to rejoice in—family love. There is a great dignity about private life—where daily duties are well performed, and social affection governs the whole; we reverence it, even while we acknowledge our senses charmed by it. This is different, as I understand, from the raptures of the world. The pleasure derived from what the world can give you, may be ecstatic; but the ecstasy has something of the nature of a dream about it. It comes, it goes, you seek to recall it, 'tis gone, there is

nothing real about it—except indeed pain. The conscience is so highly tuned in some people, it sounds an alarm at the slightest touch. I like a tender conscience, but not one always quivering. For doubt brings diffidence, and diffident people are of all others the most perplexing to deal with. They demand love, and having obtained it, scruple as to its claims—they ask indulgence, and exceed the more in proportion to the confession of their weaknesses—they are never at rest, wanting that they fear to have, and regretting that which they might have had. I prefer one who is never in doubt, though he may often be wrong.

“Family love, or the ties it winds round one, is a great safeguard against the enthrallments of the world—it prevents them enslaving us.

“A man without a home or ties, having to make the world do duty for both, reminds me of the uncomfortable dreamings of a second sleep. The sluggish body succumbs

heavily; but the brain, alert and active after the rest it has had, indulges in every odd conceit that imagination can picture. There is no rudder, no mark, no port, for an unballasted vessel to trust to."

In this manner would my father breathe forth with closed eyes the thoughts that entered his head from time to time. They rose partly through a natural fear for us; but his knowledge of the world was evidently taken more from some inward perception than real experience.

We were out with the dawn, bringing him autumn roses, steeped to the lips in dew, silvered with a breath of frost.

We spent the morning in reading to him his favourite books before he rose for the day, and after an early dinner, if it was warm and sunny, we drew him in a garden chair to a sheltered avenue of those Ladies of the Woods, the birch-trees. He loved, he said, to watch the falling leaves; they reminded him of himself; and as each

day the stems of the trees shone out more bare of foliage, the avenue assumed the appearance of a silver colonnade. In the blue mists of evening the deception was greater; we idealised stately figures, mysterious in the shadows, passing in and out of the columns—beings of whom my father whispered in his dreams, consecrated by wings, and immortalised with crowns. In the evening we gave him our thoughts of the day ; we styled ourselves, for the hour, by the name and title of a favourite heroine, enacting her part, and conversing as we supposed she would do. Each took it in turn, the others adapting themselves to the age and character of the one chosen, that we might the better bear our parts. In this exercise of our memories and discrimination my father took infinite delight, correcting us when necessary with scrupulous solicitude, while he pointed out how alike in every age, in every nation, were the virtues and failings of the human race—

the slight causes that brought out the deed that made or marred us for life—the influence of a word, a scene, the falling of a leaf, the power of example, as shown in the history of every nation—the feebleness of the human will, that now, as in the time of Adam, “did that which we ought not to do, and left undone that which we were bidden to do.”

Each life has a separate history, distinct with individuality, but each life as a context on the history of the Jews—ever backsliding, ever repenting—arrogant, stiff-necked, a stubborn generation. Here and there, in the history of life, appeared individual characters, that drew the multitude after them, from an intuitive love of that which is exalted and divine. But it was a worship that was born of the image in which we were created, which likeness we dissolved or established as, Adam-like, we yielded to temptation, or passed upwards towards the light of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

In the effect that renowned characters created at the time they lived, my father pointed out to us various instances of the swaying of the multitude by the power of one mind.

“It is singular,” he would say, “the adoration given to a noble character by even the greatest sinners. And this love of the good and great is surely a seed from the garden of Paradise. Neither must we suppose that those only of whom we read are those only who may be thus exalted. It is known to God alone and themselves, the self-sacrifice, the patience, the integrity of some souls, who, with sublime faith, obscurely and in secret, do deeds of heroism that might immortalise their names if known. There have been many such; there are now. No grander home than a cottage may enclose one of the future archangels of God. A palace may be the birth-place of a lost soul. We are all sealed with the image of God. Blessed are those who

feel the impress in their hearts, and have the power to adore their God from a perception of the beauty of goodness. The weakness of human nature may lead them into pitfalls of sin, but the love of virtue will rise like an evening star, holy, pure, glancing tremulously in the gaudy sunset, but shining brighter and stronger as the night closes round.

“ We require, my children, no greater room than our own hearths for the exercise of faith, hope, and charity, the three great virtues. It is an accredited fact that the sudden blow of a great misfortune is better borne than the daily trifles of domestic failings. These you have never experienced, and I should conceive, never will, from a natural feeling of unselfishness towards each other, which we will term love in its fullest sense; and from your education. You are ignorant of the sound of a harsh word, and know not the chain of evil things that may arise from the mere difference of an opinion; for the only dispute you have

had is, who gives up the most to the other. Jealousy is unknown to you. If I did not caress the child twice to the number of kisses I give you, you would sorrow and wonder more than herself. Envy you cannot feel, as nothing has yet passed before your eyes that you desired and could not have. Of temper you are equally ignorant; and I am led to make these remarks upon your characters, because I perceive that, in choosing the heroines whose thoughts you adopt each evening, you never select those who were celebrated for domestic virtues. You appear to see no heroism in them."

We had no answer to give our father but that we had lived with the heroines described in books, and not with their living prototypes; indeed, with none at all. We each were the only heroines of domestic life known to each other, and at present our heroism had had small scope. It was for the future to prove if we even deserved a niche on the heroic ladder.

CHAPTER XXII.

“Born to no pride, inheriting no strife,
 Nor marrying discord in a noble wife,
 Stranger to civil and religious rage,
 The good man walk’d innoxious through his age.
 No courts he saw, no suits would ever try,
 Nor dared an oath, nor hazarded a lie,
 By nature honest, by experience wise,
 Healthy by temperance, and by exercise.” — POPE.

AND ere we had realised the happiness of our domestic seclusion, Mr. Rivers made his appearance with the draught of my father’s will.

His welcome was more polite than cordial, the more so, because the will was not by any means what my father desired.

“But do not again be at the pains to bring it down yourself, Mr. Rivers; the post is the most efficient messenger I know, and the quickest.”

“ You must forgive me,” answered Mr. Rivers; “ the temptation to breathe country air is that elixir of life most coveted by lawyers. My days are so devoured by dry business, I am incapable of resisting a little relaxation.”

“ It is my turn to ask pardon,” replied my courteous father; “ drink your fill of country air, whenever it suits you, at Lovel-Leigh.”

Mr. Rivers’s thanks were too earnest to escape my father’s notice. He intended they should attract him. He was about to commence the work which first brought him to Lovel-Leigh.

If my father repented of his hasty courtesy, Mr. Rivers gave him no opportunity on this visit to cancel it. He made himself very agreeable, keeping out of the way, generally, of our usual pursuits, sending always for permission to join us in the evening. In fact, he was so judicious, we

could not, one of us, say he was distasteful to us.

At the end of three days he left us again, but not before another arrival occurred, which gave us all infinite pleasure. It was no other than that of John Clifford, who had been in the Baltic all the summer months, buying corn for his uncle, and had now a holiday given him of a few days, to see his mother.

To see his mother ! Much as she loved him, even she scouted the idea that he only came to see his mother. As for Mr. Clifford, it being a known fact that he only expressed pleasure at seeing those who came with their hands full of money, John did not for a moment flatter himself that his father would welcome him. On the contrary, it was more than probable, he would be greeted with the question, “What business had he to be wasting his time, coming down to the country, and eating up the whole larder ?” &c. &c. John came of course to

see his “little ladies,” and as Mrs. Clifford told us (for all John’s sayings, from the moment he came into the house until he left, were duly reported), he had seen no sight in all his travels that gave him half so much pleasure as seeing us. Miss Lovel was more to his mind like a young empress than ever, though he saw a grave look in her eyes, that had not been there before. But when he heard of Miss Pamela’s engagement, he did not wonder that such would be the case ; and because Miss Pamela was more gentle and loving in her ways, with such tender beauty in her eyes, he was not surprised they felt it hard to part with her. For all Miss Rose was so spirited and lively, and had no need to speak, when any one half blind could see what she meant, so pretty were her ways — they could never be dull with her in their company.

Yes, John came to see his “little ladies,” and they felt in his honest presence safe and secure from all ills. There was so much

of life, strength, and animation about John ; he was so true, his brown eyes were like a spaniel's, sagacious and good, with sunny flashes of mirth in them, and a wonderful grave glow of love, when necessary. He was not, as people call it, handsome, but had an impressive countenance, that always attracted. His forehead was not high, but broad and ample, with thick, straight brows. His nose was well shaped, his mouth rather severe in expression when shut, but full of lines of mirth and kindness when speaking. He had a large, firm chin, and his face altogether was rather square in its outlines ; but masculine and strong as it looked, he coloured with every quick and generous emotion, so that one saw his heart always told his lips what to say. He had a firm step, walking as if the whole world was nothing to him ; he was an honest, true-hearted man ; and in his frank gaze you could judge that he would not be swerved aside from his opinion.

Mr. Rivers had marked with some surprise the welcome we gave John. It was the first time he had seen the family display any feeling out of their own circle. If it troubled him at first, he left with the perfect conviction that there never had been, and never would be, any infringement of our relative positions.

We accepted John's love and services as our right, and he gave them for the same reason. Though a gentleman in every sense of the word, it pleased him and us that he should be our vassal,— and he was so.

But to our father he was like a dear and valued son.

“Mr. Rivers,” said my father to John, after that gentleman had left, “is a lawyer recommended to me by Mr. Home.”

“I have heard Mr. Rivers spoken of in London as a very clever man,—one who is likely to rise high in his profession, with the further credit of owing it all to his own exertions.”

“ He has no family connections ? ”

“ None, I believe, of any kind ; though I have heard it rumoured he is distantly related to Mr. Home. People have conjectured that this must be the case, as Mr. Home is indebted to him for great liberality and kindness, more than lawyers usually accord to clients.”

“ And his personal character, John ? ”

“ I believe it stands high, Mr. Lovel. There are few people without a besetting sin, that uprears itself in sight of all men, and his, I understand, is the laudable desire to make himself a name. If he has been a little unscrupulous in the means of which he has availed himself, it is to his credit that he is not notoriously so.”

“ I fear he is by no means a religious man.”

“ Perhaps not. Some men, confident in their own abilities, and conscious of a certain nobility in their natures, abase religion as a thing beneath them ; more

fitted for the weak-souled and feminine portion of the world. Yet few men like an irreligious woman, though they may be bordering on heathenism themselves,—so unconsciously they acknowledge its power."

"The great fear in talent and irreligion combined, is the using the first at the dictum of the last, which ends in the utter destruction of the soul of that man. The seven wicked spirits return, and hold revels there."

"Well, Sir, our conversation has approached a melancholy subject; and my least little lady of all is visibly chagrined at it. Will you suffer me to tell you some of my adventures? I neglected none of any kind that came in my way, for their especial benefit."

So evening after evening, during the week of John's holidays, he narrated to us the particulars of his voyage.

His mother generally accompanied him

at our father's request, and once or twice Mr. and Mrs. Forbes.

The latter lady was now possessed with an idea that it was her duty to question the propriety of everything that everybody did. It might be impertinent, indeed, people had told her so; but still, if but one among her numerous acquaintances was led to question himself or herself seriously for once in a life-time, her vocation was accomplished—her mission fulfilled.

Thus, though we all knew it, and she as well as any of us, she spent half an evening arguing with John upon the motives that took him to the Baltic.

“To buy corn,” said he.

“Are you sure you had no other reason?”

“Is not that a sufficient one?”

“No, it is a poor, foolish reason,—merely to buy corn, you endured that frightful voyage, bore such hardships, and made the acquaintance of such very reprehensible people.”

“It was from these people that I bought my corn ; they wanted to make a good bargain, and so did I. I probably was as reprehensible in their eyes as they seem in yours.”

“But you missed such a delightful time here. We have had one of the most charming men I ever met here, a Mr. Rivers.”

“John, I don’t like Mr. Rivers,” observed his mother.

“And pray may I ask for what reason ? He is a gentleman,—a clever man ; one day, you will see, he will become Lord Chancellor. I wish, Mrs. Clifford, you would examine into your motives, and inquire within why you don’t like Mr. Rivers. I fancy you will find a little seed of envy at the bottom of it.”

“Envy !” exclaimed Pamela and Mabel, in the same breath, each taking a hand of Mrs. Clifford’s.

“Yes, Miss Lovel, he was constantly

down at my house: poor, dear George was delighted to see the congeniality that existed between us; it was so new to me to find such conversational powers, such talent in the country. You saw nothing of this, Mrs. Clifford,—you don't look forward, as I do. With no ideas beyond the circle in which you can pivot about, you have not a reason to give for anything, but that you do and you don't."

"Very good reasons too," observed my father; "the most learned and independent characters have none better."

"Ah, Mr. Lovel, I never argue with you, because I have not had time, as you have, to study the matter. I only maintain, and always will maintain, that we ought to have a reason to give for all we do."

"That being granted, there is no more to be said."

CHAPTER XXIII.

“Hypocrisy, the only evil that walks
 Invisible, except to God alone,
 By His permissive will, through heaven and earth,
 And oft, tho’ wisdom wakes, suspicion sleeps
 At wisdom’s gate, and to simplicity
 Resigns her charge, while goodness thinks no ill
 Where no ill seems.” MILTON.

AGAIN Mr. Rivers brought down my father’s will, this time perfectly correct and ready to be signed, which was done.

“And now,” said my father, “I have no further care on my mind, but to hand over to Ferdy the money I designed for him. Has he spoken to you on the matter?”

“No, Mr. Lovel, it being your desire, I refrained from mentioning the subject.”

“Where is he now?”

“With his aunt, Miss Woodville. She has within the last year become totally blind.”

“Ah, dear Ferdy, doubtless his kind heart feels for her. We will not hurry him from so good a work as attentions to her. But if you write to him, remind him that the money is ready to be paid over to him, at any moment. This is the last week in November, he will of course be here for Christmas; I shall be very happy to see you, Mr. Rivers, at that time; but you will not expect any revels. They are unknown to us.”

“I infinitely prefer your family circle. Suffer the admiration of one who is not altogether ignorant of the ways of the world. It would be well for the future of England, if her sons had always the chance of attaining such wives as you have reared, Mr. Lovel, for some fortunate beings.”

“I like praise, Mr. Rivers, especially when I feel it is merited. My daughters

have never given me a moment's pain. We have mutually assisted each other to do our duty."

"The charm of your home is its excessive peace. We lawyers know more of the wrangling and temper of the world, than any other class of people, so that if we enshrine a goddess in our hearts, harmony is the idol we worship."

"At the forfeiture of your profession?"

"Ha, I forgot that. Our vocation would be abolished, had we no quarrels to adjust, no laws to enforce. But you will not the less accord me the perception to admire that which it is inexpedient I should wish to see practised. I enter Lovel-Leigh, and the gracious odours of benevolence and truth permeate through the air — floating about in balmy gushes, that fill the heart and senses with ineffable peace. I leave it — and the chill of a cold, selfish world acts upon the frame like ice, congealing it."

("Out of what book," I thought, "has Mr. Rivers borrowed this?")

“I am not insensible to impressions myself; but believe me, Mr. Rivers, if your vocation and duties lie in the world, make the best of it. The heart is never starved for want of work — its sympathies are as easily, perhaps more often, roused in the world than out of it.”

“They are roused, but in general 'tis for evil, not good.”

“Pardon me, the evil or the good depends greatly on yourself.”

“Perhaps so : would it be asking too much, if I requested the favour of corresponding with you ?”

“I can have little with which to entertain you, Mr. Rivers.”

“Let me try ; I shall not deserve the favour, if I do not provoke answers.”

“So be it ; if I seem to respond feebly, you will remember my shattered nerves, and that all the strength I possess belongs to my children.”

“And yet the intellect is so bright. They

would gain, like Milton's daughters, by acting as your clerks."

"Ah! they do so now; but we have too short a time to be together to take up any new interest."

"I am selfish. I forgot, Mr. Lovel, that what is of much importance to me, is but a weariness to you. If there is anything going on in the great world that will interest you, I shall give myself the pleasure of writing, and consider that all is going on well, even if I receive no replies."

From this conversation I drew the conclusion that Mr. Rivers hoped to engage Mabel in a correspondence with him, acting as her father's amanuensis. He wrote, and she answered his letters, as directed by my father; and though he now and then thanked the fair writer for the kindness she bestowed on him, in recording her father's thoughts and wishes, he had no clue to judge which of the sisters acted scribe, and his messages received no reply.

We suppose from after circumstances that we owed to him a sudden visit from Lady Deane. She only gave us so much notice of her coming as to ensure the carriage being sent to meet her at Rudchester. To us, she did not scruple to say that she came to see her benefactor, our father, in such haste, as from all accounts he was failing so fast, she might lose the opportunity. We heard her in silence, Mabel with an indignation too lofty for words, Pamela with a sudden gush of tears, and myself because I was unable to speak.

Oh, world! how corroding is thine influence, that the holiest affections and strongest sympathies are regarded as no more than a sort of business! we live, we love, we perform duties, we weep, we rejoice, and there is a time for all these—and then a time to die. It must come, it has come, and we take it as a natural consequence, he or she, who was the world to us, is about to die. We must ask their

last wishes, we must treasure up their last words, we must be at pains to be assured of their souls' welfare, and then we must bury them. It is necessary to show that arbitrary monarch, the world, how much we estimated them when alive, by the manner in which we deck them out when dead. A handsome funeral! Yes, that we must order, we loved them so much. Handsome mourning! Yes, of the very best. Yards of crape, and no borders of white to be seen, that the world may judge how we mourn them. As for the grief that cannot speak, of the agony that cannot think, what are we to do with them? Strangers come and bury our dead, while we are distracted with weeping, and the world thinks it so odd of us; to have been so fond when alive, so neglectful when dead, so selfish."

Lady Deane was one of those who paid every deference to the world. She hurried from town to see her connection and benefactor before he died. It was her duty; as

for any feeling in it, she had none. He had been an ailing man all his life, latterly a confirmed invalid. His daughters must be aware, as she was, that he could hardly wear out another year of life, and that any slight ill, which would merely twinge a strong frame, might snap the cord of his fragile existence. Under these circumstances, of what use was delicacy?—None. If she was in Mabel's place she would begin and make every preparation for the final change. There could be no harm, at all events, in anticipation.

Thus probing our quivering hearts, with the burning stings of indifference and calculation, Lady Deane added to her sins in our eyes, by an ill-disguised favouring of Mr. Rivers. From the moment she came into the house, until she left it, her words were a *pæan* in his praise.

Our father appeared surprised that they knew each other, and obtained no very satisfactory account of their presumed friendship;

and though we said nothing to any one, both Mabel and I exchanged the idea that her visit was more to further his cause than the reason she had given us ; that reason which sounded so strange, so unreal, so full of anguish to us.

He did not show his wisdom, if our conjecture was right. The worldly, narrow-minded, indiscreet woman betrayed her secret from an unconscious folly, that smothered all right and wrong in a code of shrewd maxims, peculiarly revolting to the ingenuous mind of youth ; and like drops of water on polished marble, her oily phrases fell from her lips with an ominous splash, that obliterated them at once, though they left a fume behind them as of air tainted with the odour of dying flowers.

To our father, she had given as her reason for coming, the desire to be of use in preparing for Pamela's wedding.

“ My house is quite at your service, my

dear cousin; you will of course come up to town for the *trousseau*, after Christmas."

"I think not, Mrs. Watson will kindly do all we wish."

"Mrs. Watson is entirely out of date now. Nothing will go down but French people. You must be persuaded by me, and come and choose for yourself. Mrs. Watson indeed! I feel sure Ferdinand will never permit it."

"I am quite of your ladyship's mind," observed Mrs. Forbes, who had dined with us. "The last time she came here, I was struck with the dowdiness of everything."

My father gazed smilingly at his three girls; and if he mentally contrasted their dress and appearance with that of Lady Deane, he was sufficiently well content to say no more.

She perhaps read his thoughts, for she remarked that knowing we saw so little company, she had brought no fashionable dresses with her.

“ You will let the two girls come to me after Christmas, at all events.”

“ No, I cannot spare them for a moment.”

“ But pray think of the sad want of knowledge they have, of everything in the world, and Ferdinand so immensely particular.”

“ He has chosen with his eyes open.”

“ I should be so delighted to chaperon them. In fact, it has been the desire of my life to have your girls under my roof, that I might, by all the cares of a mother to them, return a little of the debt of gratitude I owe you.”

“ I ignore the debt, and am their mother myself.”

“ Well ! I am sorry. I fear Ferdinand will be much hurt. He was so anxious that Pamela should be under my care for a while.”

CHAPTER XXIV.

“He says he loves my daughter ;
I think so too—for never gazed the moon
Upon the water, as he will stand and read,
As ’twere, my daughter’s eyes.”—SHAKSPEARE.

THOUGH we expressed nothing of the vexation caused by Lady Deane, it was a sensible delight to be rid of her. She did what she came for, as well as it lay in so frivolous a power to do.

We experienced how easy it is for the daily thorns of life to prick sharper than a stab of woe. To live always with Lady Deane would have been a more doleful life to us than solitary confinement. Even her favours and civilities bore so worldly a character it was hard to be grateful; and

the mixture of selfishness and morality, heartlessness and religion, was a spectacle that startled us into a sort of shame. She seemed to possess an unlicensed spirit, that was bound by neither law nor honour, moved only by the whims that in turns possessed her ; and at the same time had such a plausible show of good feeling, it required constant experience to convince oneself, she never spoke the truth. She had one of those strange natures that retained all the evil dispositions of her youth, unsoftened by age or experience. • But at last she left us, no doubt in the full satisfaction that she had performed wonders ; for Ferdy followed her almost immediately, and from his heedless tongue slipped all sorts of things that his coadjutors, Lady Deane and Mr. Rivers, would have been abashed to hear. But not before our father.

Once more our Pamela became lost to us, and inspired only by the spells of love.

“Ferdy hopes you will lend him your diamonds, Mabel ; he wishes to order a set precisely the same for me.”

“Mine are yours, Pamela.”

“Oh, no, love ; that shall never be.”

“Dissuade him, sister, at all events ; for remember his debts.”

“True ; thanks, dearest Mabel, for reminding me of my duty. How could I forget it ? He has ordered for me a dressing-case, that is to cost eighty guineas ; and I thought so much of his kindness that I neither remembered the debts, nor my father’s beautiful gift to me our last birthday. Would it be wronging his generous heart to tell him I have already a perfect dressing-case ? ”

“I know not how it can be wrong to fulfil a positive duty. Our father is about to pay his debts, so that he may be a free man on his marriage day. With all this expenditure of presents, my Pamela, will our father’s wishes be fulfilled ? ”

‘ I fear not, Mabel; and he was going, or has ordered for you, a set of pearls like mine.’

“ Shall I speak to him, Pamela? I may be able just to hint at that which you would not like to do.”

“ Thank you, Mabel. I must not forget that I owe him duty.”

“ Not yet, dear Pamela.”

“ No, not yet, 'tis true; but my love and duty are not to be withheld until I pronounce my vows. They are his already.”

“ Then I will go to him.”

Mabel had very little difficulty in diverting Ferdy from his intentions. Indeed, it appeared that what he had represented to Pamela as done was not even begun, which was so far fortunate. Voluminously as he had talked, a little purse was the sole present he had bought for Pamela, which I suspected was purchased at Rudchester, on his way down; and that he considered it necessary to talk so largely to disguise

from penetrating eyes that he had never thought of her at all. And in doing this he but betrayed himself to us, with nothing to expel from her unsuspecting heart. He was pleased about the diamonds; asked to look at them; begged Mabel to leave them in his charge. He would like to take them to town, to see if Pamela's cypher could not be inserted in diamonds.

“I shall put them on Pamela the day she is married. Neither you nor any one else shall see them again until that day.”

“You are so suspicious, Mabel. Are they not quite as safe in my keeping as yours?”

“They may be; but they shall not be.”

“You are so peremptory, so unlike dear Pamela. I told Rivers that I had selected the flower of the flock; upon my soul I did.”

Mabel having left the room without vouchsafing him any answer, he (unwonted circumstance) turned to me.

“Don’t you think so, Rose? Poor child, she can’t answer me! Preposterous to make her a co-heiress. You are angry, child. You should not be angry with Ferdy, who is about to be your brother. But tell me; you can nod your head, you know, in the affirmative. Does Mabel take to Rivers at all? Do you think she will have him? You mean no, I suppose, by that sign. Well, you may tell her from me she had better think about it. He says I am not to marry until he does; so she had better be careful, or I’ll make the house too hot to hold any one. I won’t wait a day after the 15th of March. I’ll not have my dear little tender-hearted Pamela made unhappy because Mabel is so deuced proud, she cannot stomach a lawyer.” But to go on with Ferdy’s remarks is too painful. Like people of his stamp, he was petulantly blustering, and out of his very vociferations weakened his cause. It was no merit in me to be silent; but that

is a stolid countenance which cannot express indignation and contempt; and the common-place, something coarse language that Ferdy indulged in, while it horrified, disgusted me.

I ran out under the canopy of heaven. I looked up into it, drinking largely of the pure ether; my soul expanded, and bathed itself with sunshine and godly things. I covered myself with a radiant robe of fancy. The ground was carpeted with leaves, that rustled as happy playfellows under my feet. Like Moses, I traced a glorious presence in the bushes, and bent my head with humility, as if to listen for divine music reverberating from every leaf. I perceived a worm struggling on the pathway. I took it up, and wondered if it was as earthy as Ferdy, but tenderly I put it back. It was God's work —it was good.

How could we open Pamela's eyes? Was this marriage ever to be? Admitting into our loving circle a selfish braggart, who

would eventually torment Mabel through Pamela, and in the end break the latter's heart.

No one in our house knew so much of Ferdy's real character as myself, because, as before hinted, he never considered it necessary to disguise it to me.

Should I tell my father ?

A long mental conflict decided me to say nothing. Our father's comfort was too precious to be broken by anything so insignificant as Ferdy ; and to convince Pamela, floating on clouds of happiness, that, like Hope, concealed the place on which she stood, was even to Mabel an impossible task. After all, as long as we only suffered, Mabel would care as little as I. It would be assessing Ferdy's powers at too great a valuation, to test them against our love. He might be all in all to Pamela ; but in the moment of peril, expediency, pressure, we should be there to aid her. Our love must surely outbalance all hurtful things. It were worthless without.

Then there floated through my brain all that I knew of all love that had ever been described and chronicled, and I tested the instances that memory brought up one by one, by my own conceptions of its power, and was comforted. Time, change, even death—strong weapons as they might be—were blunt and powerless under the mighty influence of unselfish love. I lost my fears, in eagerness to court the contest. I was proud, self-reliant, an enthusiast, and saw nothing grievous, but the paltry enemy with whom we had to deal; and, like the Barber in the “Arabian Nights,” was about to stamp my foot in a fit of vainglory, when my tray of glass tottered, swayed, fell over, and was dashed to atoms.

Mr. Rivers stood before me !

With an air of self-complacency, of at-homish-ness, of an assumption of more than friendly interest, a sort of fraternal patronising of the child of the house, he was greeting me. No second-sight inherited

from my great-grandfather Seaton was necessary to foreshadow to me what was coming.

Mr. Rivers had performed the ordeal he considered necessary, as a preliminary to his suit—and which, out of compliment to the worth of the object, he had lengthened to the most deferential period.

In that one moment of greeting, I had to confess, with humility, he was an enemy I should fear. There was something so coldly unscrupulous in those scintillating eyes—so unrelentingly hard in the thin, compressed lips.

He was to be our enemy, for Mabel would not have him; she would likely disdain to hear him out. And he was prepared for that turn in his affairs. “The other twin, in whom he was interested,” had never given him one single little token of which he could boast, that she was interested in him. But the proper time had arrived for him to explain himself. He knew her first

in September ; he had been three times to Lovel-Leigh ; Lady Deane and Mrs. Forbes had both befriended him, and performed for him the good office of "Chorus," as in a Greek play. He had studied poetry and fine sentences ; he had employed a new tailor ; he was sedulous in attending to the shock of hay on his head — once having it even curled. He had been demonstrative on both his last visits. The most exacting woman in the world could demand no more.

I heard the words, my Mabel's words.

"I pray of you, Mr. Rivers, to spare my father the fatigue of listening to that which is best forgotten."

"You refuse me arbitrarily and without compromise?"

"Arbitrarily and without compromise!"

"And for no justifiable reason?"

"Except the simple one, that I have no love for you."

"It will come, Miss Lovel,—let me wait a year."

“I should be wrong to trifle with you—a hundred years, it would be the same.”

“There is more in such determination, than the common feeling of disinclination to marry. I have an enemy.”

“Yes, yourself.”

“Miss Lovel!” he began, with his light eyes blazing; he paused—and then rearing his head with the supercilious disdain that had so riveted my attention the first time I saw him—he continued:

“I shall lay my proposals before your father. You are an obedient daughter; from him you will perhaps hear reason. I look upon your refusal, as the youthful caprice of an inexperienced girl! and shall treat it as such.”

“Once more, I desire of you to refrain from troubling my father.”

“I am sorry, Miss Lovel, to refuse your just request. If you will give me a limit.”

“Not a moment.”

“Then adieu for the present. Believe

me that, at our next meeting, the little feminine temper that you have shown shall not be remembered against you. I will blot it from my mind."

Oh ! for a wealth of words, a stinging tongue, a ringing voice !

But Mabel did better—a colour rose to her face, as if the wind blew on it—but serene stateliness sat like a jewel on her brow, and the calm, clear eyes looked out full and frank, with a youthful courage of disdain in them—while the red lips were lightly set together, as if words were altogether out of place in such a cause.

He eyed her for the moment, as if to try his power at quailing her spirit by one of his basilisk glances; but unmoved she looked it down—and he left her.

Then I crept into her arms, and in two minutes we were laughing together over the sad blunder of a drowsy, half-torpid wasp, that, beguiled by a hot December sun, had crept out and mistaken a knot of gay ribbon for a flower. So we daintily

bore him out, and laid him on a bewildered bit of honeysuckle, that was pale with surprise at the mistake she had made in the time of year, all pinched and shaking with nips of frost. And we roamed through the garden, if haply there was something new blooming out, beguiled by the open weather to think that Christmas had passed. But there were only blotched and untidy Christmas roses, with unrelenting stalks and earth-daubed leaves.

The robins twittered little plaints, as if 'twas cold and dreary for them—they mourned for the blossoming, windy spring, and for the singing in the trees, that provoked their thrilling replies.

I felt, like the robins, chilled—and had a longing to moan, and relieve my heart of its melancholy.

But Mabel looked happy, and her eyes wandered about as if she saw blessings on every side of her. Her countenance was serene with faith and hope.

But a voice called her. It was Ferdy.

When Ferdy had a deed to do, it was essentially necessary that it should be as much imbued with himself as it was possible for a matter that did not concern him to be. "I said, and I advised, and I thought," so garnished the simplest message given him, that one was apt to consider it had nothing to do with oneself. An opportunity for employing the personal pronoun was irresistible.

"My dear Mabel," he exclaimed, with an assumption of authority and wisdom that ill became him, "what folly have you been committing—and without asking mine or any other person's advice?"

"Does my father want me, Ferdy?"

"A person for whom I have so great a regard, my brother—a brother, I mean, in everything—let me tell you, I take it as a slight to myself; you have put an affront upon me; and I would wish you to understand, I am not to be affronted for nothing."

“Did my father send you?”

“I require no sending—I considered myself called upon instantly to assume the part of an elder brother—as that elder brother I command you to give Rivers a proper and reasonable answer. Rose, leave us, you have no right to interfere, you are too young to understand the importance of what I am saying.”

“She tells me, my father does wish for me. I go.”

“You are very meddling, Rose; 'tis true, he sent me for her; but I wished to break her in a little; I wished her to know that I am displeased with her. If she does not choose to marry Rivers, my friend, she may cause a great deal of mischief—perhaps I may refuse to be her brother at all, and then she will have to answer for Pamela’s death. My poor little Pamela!”

Mr. Rivers joining him, Ferdy entered into a profuse detail of all he had said to Mabel, which gradually gathered into a

considerable narrative ; out of which might be collected but very little of what did occur. Mr. Rivers making no reply, and evidently estimating what Ferdy said at its worth, the latter proceeded to declamation.

“ She has no heart, and never had ; she never cared for me, though she was always my favourite as a child. I brought her the most beautiful doll from Paris ; I dare say 'tis destroyed ; I almost think she dislikes me—it may be jealousy, but, at all events, I am sure she is heartless.”

A murmur of dissent from Mr. Rivers set him going again.

“ Perhaps you took her by surprise, or did not open the matter nicely, as I should have done ; girls are so whimmy ; and yet they ought to be careful how they reject the first offer, they may never get another ; I shall tell her that. But what did you say, Algy ? Perhaps there is some mistake, and I can put you right.”

Mr. Rivers appeared disinclined to respond to this friendly advice, so Ferdy proceeded to extract it from him.

“Did you tell how struck you were with her at first sight?”

“Of course; I told her she must have seen the impression she made upon me, which increased in intensity after every interview.”

“Very good, I could not have done better myself. And her reply was——”

“She regretted I had not also observed that the feeling was unreciprocal.”

“Proud, heartless girl! just like her. What did you say then?”

“Miss Lovel, so far from it, I have nourished mine, until it has grown to a volume and power, that I only relinquish the hope of winning you, with my life.”

“Excellent! You must have borrowed that from me. It is just like one of my speeches.”

“Borrowed or not, it was without effect. She made no reply, but by a disdain-

ful look. I then said I took her silence for permission to speak to her father, upon which she commanded me not to do so, at last using supplication. Fortunately I am so far unlike you, I do not permit my feelings to overcome my judgment. She is a girl I can very well love, but she must be my wife before she can befool me. Then I have no objection to unbend, and taste the draughts of love's folly, in which you have drunk away your wits, Ferdy."

"Ah! and you envy me—you know you do. But you must have advantages, my dear fellow, you must have the air, the figure, the—you know what, Algy."

And Ferdy, in drawing himself up, and looking in the mirror, spied me on the window-sill in my usual seat, to which I had retired.

His exclamation drew Mr. Rivers's attention, who came towards me.

"Rose," he said taking my hand in his, "be my friend, and I will be a true brother to you."

I flung his away.

“ You will not betray this conversation. I do indeed love Mabel, after my fashion. How disdainful the child looks ! Listen—as I will be the best of brothers, a true friend, so can I be a bitter enemy. She smiles, as much as to say she knows it, and cares not for it. Do you understand her signs, Ferdy ? I am anxious to know what the little expressive face means.”

I showed him the tablets on which I wrote answers, when necessary.

He asked,—

“ Will you persuade Mabel to be my wife ?”

I answered,—

“ Miss Lovel requires no persuasion to do what is right.”

“ Rose, you do not like me.”

I would not answer this until he wondering why, I wrote.

“ I am Miss Rose Lovel to you, and will only hold intercourse as such.”

“ The one is prouder than the other. I wish to be your friend, child ; if I become your brother you shall speak. Ay, talk as others talk ; that shall be one of my first cares. Do you understand ? You shall be taught to speak.”

There was no gratitude in my look, none to be written on my tablets. It seemed to me less an evil to be dumb than to owe the sweetest voice from such a hand. It was not so much prejudice on my part, as the bargain that he inferred. The man’s soul was of so cramped a nature,—having witnessed once the ardour of my wishes, he thought to bribe me to forget my sister.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

LONDON
PRINTED BY SPOTTISWOODE AND CO.
NEW-STREET SQUARE

